"Where there is no vision the people perish"

MAY 1942 JUNE

The Poetry Review

One Shilling Net

(Annual Postal Subscription, 6s. 6d.; U.S.A., 2 Dollars)

The Journal of the Poetry Society (Incorporated) and a magazine of general poetic interest published in England bi-monthly by

THE POETRY SOCIETY (INCORPORATED), 33 Portman Square, London, W.1

American Editorial Office: 299 Park Avenue, New York

"The leading poetry magazine of the world . . . of international eminence"
—LITERARY DIGEST

THE POETRY REVIEW

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All literary communications should be addressed to the Editor, The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London, W.C.1. No MSS. can be considered or returned unless accompanied by stamped addressed envelope. The Editor accepts no responsibility for the safe custody or return of any MS.

Printed in Great Britain by Diemer & Reynolds Ltd., 26-30 Midland Road, Bedford, and Published by the Proprietors, The Poetry Society (Incorporated), at 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, England.

KALIDASA AND SHAKESPEARE

BEAUTY, for the European, is something very special, very definite, something clear-cut. It is all that embodies the ideal of the race. It is *their* thought, *their* heart, *their* blood, perpetuated in a handful of dust. It is Greece; it is Rome; it is France; it is England. They are quite sure what beauty means. But some of us have our doubts. We find that beauty is as variable as the types of human beings. An English damsel and an Indian damsel may both be called lovely. To put one above another is sheer idolatry.

The fact is, man is not the same everywhere. This is a truth that is often ignored because most men are unaware of it. The output of each social group has a local habitation and a name. In other words, all thought has an ecology. Whatever man produces is coloured by his surrounding. Even the most original personality cannot escape this fate.

Through Shakespeare speaks the whole of the Elizabethan age; through Kalidasa, so far as we can be sure of his date, the best of the epoch of Vikramaditya. To compare and contrast the two is, ultimately, to compare and contrast the spiritual adventure of England with that of India.

This is not possible in a brief essay. All that can be done here is to suggest some contrast and contact between the two poets. Kalidasa and Shakespeare, although antipodal in many respects, touch each other at more than one point.

To begin with some points of contrast. These are the most striking.

Shakespeare lived in a semi-barbarous age, when murder, arson, rape, lechery, existed side by side with the free questings of the spirit. He was, as Romain Rolland once remarked to me, only the "most wonderful creature in that superb Elizabethan menagerie." Yes, menagerie is the fittest word to describe the ethos and aroma of the epoch. Kalidasa, on the other hand, passed his days within a period of great culture, when thought and sentiment had attained a singular maturity and beauty. Here we may contrast the blood and thunder, indeed the mere clatter and noise, of many of Shakespeare's plays with the quiet refinement and studied subtlety of Kalidasa. This indicates that the one was writing for the incult, brutal mob (the rich and the titled were a mob too), while the other for an audience of knowledge and taste. The Indian poet played, like a master-musician, upon a language rich and harmonious, capable of conveying the subtlest nuances of thought; the English poet hammered into music, now rude, now wildly beautiful, a tongue still in the making. The butchery of Shakespeare's plays,

which often end because no one is left alive on the stage, would have seemed to Kalidasa and his age a barbarous theme for a poet; to Shakespeare, perhaps, Kalidasa's swarm of divinities (Indra and Co.) would have appeared nothing less than intermundane invalids.

Still deeper differences there are, but we cannot afford to linger over them. Suffice it to say that Shakespeare had no belief in God, no faith in immortality, no trust in the betterment of our lot in a future state. For him this life was the only reality: all else was smoke, dimming the glow of truth. (Shakespeare; by the by, was more anti-Christian than even Nietzsche.) He had occasional mystical glimpses, but no steady or continuous vision. In all this he was the very antithesis of Kalidasa. The English poet, in his outlook, was probably wiser than the Indian; but he was not half so profound. He put too high a valuation upon man: unlike Kalidasa, he did not see the unity of all sentient life (let us recall the farewell scene in *Sakuntala,* Act IV).

But to come to contacts. In their attitude to love and woman and the charmed world of the faëry the two poets see in parallel.

Women are the foundation of Kalidasa's art: on them he lavished all the colours on his palette. The same, in lesser degree, is true of Shakespeare also. Both poets, in their different ways, found themselves fascinated by women of two extreme types: the enchantress and the simple girl. The one gave us Malavika and Sakuntala; the other, Cleopatra and Miranda. And both came to feel that, in the end, *amor vincit omnia.* But both also realised, or, rather, knew, that in order to be happy in this world one had to have illusions. Sakuntala and Miranda triumph over circumstances not because they are particularly resourceful or masterful, but because they have the capacity to surrender themselves completely, unquestionably, irrevocably. For them love is a form of dedication. And the two poets, gazing, as it were, from on high, saw that victory in love lies with that person who puts self last. True love, according to them, is a feeling that, once aroused, is independent of time and place. It is a gift from the treasury of Heaven, which neither moth nor rust can corrupt. In brief, the two poets have the same philosophy of love.

Whether we think of Juliet or of Jessica, or of Urvasi or of Malavika, the feeling that comes to birth in these flaming hearts is rendered with a freshness and a grace that are inimitable. Just as the corn ripens, the flower blooms and the noon-day sun shines, so do they love, these breathing immortal figures, with all the illusions and enchantments of youth. We have seen them fancy-free; we shall find them passionate lovers. All things ripen in due season.

With a deep and tender glance the two poets have explored the variegated emotions of these loving souls; and both have painted for us, with matchless art, the same willing abasement before a beloved spirit, the same domination suffered with delight, and the same devotion that knows how to give all and how to forgive all. But every picture has a reverse side; and the two poets, who saw woman in all her diversity and complexity, have limned for us, with equal mastery, jealousy in all its nuances.

Perhaps the Hindu poet surpassed his English rival in delicacy and penetration; a sigh, a groan, a smile, a blush, an airy nothing of feeling, conveyed to him the very secret of a woman's soul. The restless and unfastidious genius of Shakespeare found it irksome to linger over these delicate and subtle shades of emotion. Yet, on the whole, both poets had a sharp eye for woman's ways. Only, Kalidasa's heroines are more subtly presented. Shakespeare drew men better, far better: women he saw as a man sees them, not as they see themselves or are seen by one of themselves.

The surprising thing, in studying the two poets, is not to find them envisioning love and woman in a similar light, but to find among them parallelisms even in matters of technique. (This is an arresting topic, but I cannot go into it here.) And then, just as they are at one, in the main, in their analysis of the human heart, so they seem to delight in the same grand simplicities. Open air, magic, moonlight, fairies, the charmed world of the little people—these, these meant not a little to them. And, above all, music and flowers.

All this gives us pause. It shows that, despite the ejects of half-educated writers like Kipling, India is nearer to England than is commonly supposed. The brooding Northern element in the British genius—think of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, of Coleridge, of Blake, of A.E.—equates with the inwardness of the Hindus. But this requires a book, which I hope some young English author will undertake. None is more needed to-day.

Certain English critics, and these the most vocal, exaggerate the importance of Shakespeare. It is crude, primitive or fabulously naïve to look upon the poet as "infallible" and, in any case, as superior to every other artist. This veneration for the bard, converting him into a kind of Mecca and Medina, may be said to be merely a form of national eccentricity. Happily, thinkers are more broad-minded. The late Thomas Whittaker, who was a fine Neo-Platonist scholar and also a deep student of Shakespeare, told me that he considered the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus as the most magnificent thing in European literature.

Swinburne, it appears, held the same view. Not long ago Havelock Ellis confessed that he was no longer impressed by the sound and fury of Shakespeare's tragedies, while Professor Emile Legouis, speaking of the comedies and histories, admitted to me that they were full of local and perishable elements. The truth is that there is very little in the work of even the greatest men that is of permanent value. Shakespeare has as much that lasts as most men; but to consider everything of his as sacrosanct is, not to mince words, sheer rubbish.

Personally, about half-a-dozen plays and a few sonnets are all that I care for: there are some things, like *The Merchant of Venice,* which, with the exception of fragments here and there, I find I can scarcely read—my fault perhaps. Less and less I am attracted by what deals with the show of things. In the bulk of his work Shakespeare is too much of an artist, and paradoxical as it may seem, this was his great limitation. I often feel that there is more humanity in a single page of Dickens than in an entire play of Shakespeare. This may sound odd, but is none the less true.

Kalidasa had his failures too. The *Race of Raghu,* though sprayed with felicities, is a little too reminiscent of the fawning courtier. The *Cycle of Seasons* is a curious and faithful description of the climate of India, but it is not a memorable creation. The *Cloud Messenger* is in a class by itself, a delicate and fragrant masterpiece, fresh as a flower, tender as an Indian night, opal as love. *Malavikagnimitra,* though a social document of the first importance, is a work of minor import. Sometimes a play issues out of the silence like a fawn from a forest, and then enters into the reservoir of our dreams. Of such a kind are *Sakuntala* and *Vikramorvasi,* gracious creations, at once delicate and durable, uniting earth and heaven. There is nothing quite like these plays in the literatures of the world: they are *sui generis.*

Shakespeare is better known than Kalidasa, just as Jack Dempsey is better known than Ramakrishna, even in India! which merely shows that power, however it may express itself, is more easily recognisable than spiritual beauty. Shakespeare represents the aggressive restlessness of the West; Kalidasa, the serene smile of India. The one rushed through life like a tormented and agonised Titan; the other threaded his way with the calm assurance of a God. Gather ye rose-buds while ye may, thought Shakespeare; we are but wayfarers upon this satellite of the voyaging sun, murmured Kalidasa, and began to listen to the carol of the bluebells.

Who is the greater of the two? I think the question is stupid. It argues a certain insensibility to attempt to arrange creative artists in order of merit, as though they were schoolboys at an examination. The

inquiry has no meaning for me. Nevertheless, if I were to be pressed for an answer, I should quote the following brief dialogue between Rossini and an unknown inquirer :

"Quel est, à votre sens, le plus grand musicien ?"
"Beethoven."
"Et Mozart ?"
"Il est le seul."

Substitute Shakespeare for Beethoven, and Kalidasa for Mozart. Need I be more explicit ? RANJEE G. SHAHANI.

THE APPLE HARVEST

THE sirens sound, the tumult of the night
Breaks forth to bay the sly November moon.

Now at La Chung beneath the apple trees
The women move and fill their aprons full,
Their faces apple round, and russet brown.
The winter-whispering wind brings in the cold
Across the wide blue silence ; laughter rings,
And quick hands clap as on the powdered snow
The red boots dance, the round red apples roll ;
And trampled bare beneath the mules shod feet
Dark earth wakes iron echoes. Through the clear
Thin air of evening home the harvest comes
With shout and song and brazen bells. A din
Of men and mules and clamourous children fills
The Himalayan quietude. The beast
Carved on the cornice of the temple glares
Across the darkening valleys where the hills
Benign as drowsy dragons breathe the fume
Of feather-curling mist that covers them.
The Lama drones his prayer, and butter-gold
The flame before the Buddha flares and dies . . .
Another season ends, the children sleep ;
The gathered apples lie cool cheek to cheek.
The rosy women yawn as they untie
Their long red boots ; and in the stable droop
The mules' great furry ears : and all things rest.

The sirens sound, the darkened windows shake,
But infinitely far, untouched, secure,
The apples of La Chung are gathered in,
And by this thought my soul is comforted.

BARBARA BINGLEY.

THE LOST AIRMAN

ALL that was the truth of him
In so short a span,
Gathered up the youth of him
That he become a man.

Buckled on his coat of mail
And gave him height;
Marked the trail
Against the hazard of the night.

Not bravest heart can fight
The air on broken wing;
Only the spirit in its flight
Can do this thing.

They took from him his coat of mail
And armoured him with light;
Swiftly was drawn aside the veil
That he become a knight.

Some say the destiny of man
Is graven at the source;
Some say there is not counter-plan
That can evade its course.

Sergeant-Pilot Peter Ingram, died in action, November 8th, 1941: aged nineteen years.

PAULINE EMERIC.

FROST

I FOUND an earth-worm on the grass
And it was frozen stiff:
I thought if it should come to pass . . .
Jesu! I murmured, if . . .
A Russian soldier lay like this
All naked to the moon,
Without his Mother there to kiss
Farewell. Will it be soon
My own dear love shall fall and die
In the cold night with no-one by?

BARBARA DRUMMOND.

FORM AND THE WORK IN HAND

TO bother any critic writing a review or an article there is the problem of form, a problem that critics in weeklies and popular magazines are always apt to skimp, because it is something too difficult to be settled in a paragraph, and with the wave of a hand. Yet it is the problem nearest to the artist, and the consideration of greatest importance in assessing a work of art. It is also, of course, partly because of these other things, the point on which there is least agreement. For Form is apt to be a most nebulous conception in the hands of a critic. Yet, without considering it, though it is possible to appreciate poetry, it is not possible to criticise it. It is not possible to criticise poetry for its meaning alone, nor for the exactness of its metre. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," has the sound and the form of poetry, yet, if we do not know what it means, it is nonsense. It is only because it has been current as a saying for so long that it is intelligible and accepted as such. We *know* what that means. But poetry we do not at once know the meaning of. "I wandered lonely as a cloud" is accepted as poetical, because it is known: but what about, "I sounded evil as a siren"? And if "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," were the line of a poem and not a well-known saying, is it not criticisable on the grounds that it does not make sense and that it does not scan? It is here that we are up against the critic and his idea of form. Because to the poet form is not a matter of mere lines, of dactyl and spondee, of rhyme and stanza, of comma and fullstop. These are merely properties or tools with which he has to work, and form is what emerges from the completion of the work in hand. The goodness of his poetry is not dependent on the exactness of its scansion or the adroitness of its rhyme-scheme. There is plenty of poetry that rhymes and scans perfectly, the sentiments of which are acceptable, but which lacks organic form, and is therefore bad. Form is more easily realisable in the art of sculpture. There you have a block of stone, or a piece of wood, and out of it, by hacking boldly, or by careful chiselling, the artist creates a form that is easily apparent, alike in Rodin's famous Kiss, Epstein's Jacob and the Angel, or Henry Moore's figures. The sculptor selects his material, his subject, sets to work, and the formal sculpture is the result. What the form depends on is first and last the artist's imagination and his intention. Epstein's giant figures differ in conception from his bronze heads, yet the form in both is apposite. Adam, or the head of Mr. Maisky, whichever you choose, the form is there. For form is a variable quality. Form is a *rightness* in the work of art which cannot be checked by tape measure or formulated precepts. The form the artist puts on his work is a

direct result of his skill. This can most easily be seen in the work of a painter like Picasso, whose work is variable in the outward points of style, but indelibly stamped with his personality, and of which the formal merit is invariable. Form should have this same connotation in all art, but in criticism of poetry in particular it is lost sight of. Poets are condemned for formal inadequacy on grounds which would make a child laugh. Because this or that is wrong with the scansion, a word too much or a word too little or a rhyme that is not there, or because of what critics are pleased to refer to as "carelessness" or "looseness of expression." Such accusations could be levelled equally against Shakespeare as against those modern poets who suffer from them.

But we are not at the end of the difficulty with form there. Because "free verse" was invented, presumably as a term for critics to use against certain poets, a huge number of young, or old, would-be poets who wish to be modern write without any consideration of form in long straggling lines or in short jerky ones, or in both, because they believe this shows they keep up with the times. An hour's perusal of a good anthology such as Anne Ridler's "A little Book of Modern Verse" should disillusion them. There they will find that most of the poetry is extremely strict formally. Those who experiment with form among modern poets are experts in form, a simple fact that both the critic and the would-be poet is apt to overlook. They are *well-versed in the art.* And their poems are not formless, however free they may appear to be. Kay Boyle's poems are a good example of formal experiment which appears "free" and even careless, but which are in fact obviously most carefully created formal works of art. The serious artist may sometimes be "careless" by his own standards, but he is rarely guilty of continual "looseness of expression." Such habitual looseness or carelessness is the mark of the amateur, the dilettante, or the sheerly bad artist.

This is perhaps a long and wordy introduction to the work under consideration, but so frequently do the old fallacies bear new currency and the same charges arise again against modern poetry that it does seem worth while: and the poetry in one of the books under consideration bears special relation to these observations. It is a volume of poems by Alan Hodge, Norman Cameron and Robert Graves, called "Work in Hand" (Hogarth Press, 2s. 6d.), and is by far the most interesting book yet put out in the New Hogarth Library. The issue of form is raised at once by the claim on the dust-cover that "the authors are poets in the main English tradition." How accurate this description is I will leave to the judgment of its readers: it depends, of course, just what you think the main English tradition is. What concerns me at the moment is its implication with regard to form. For these poets are of a

kind. Under the tutelage of Laura Riding and Robert Graves, they have particularly interested themselves in the formal art of poetry: by this I mean that, bearing in mind the alleged looseness and carelessness of much contemporary verse, they have consciously set themselves the task of *being poets* in the formal sense: their greatest pride (and merit) is in their craftsmanship. It also says on the dust-cover that "instead of reporting and moralising on external events, whether military, cosmic or pastoral, they have tried to make sense of internal ones." In other words, they have their private worlds and private legends—specifically poetic worlds—and they have their art, whereby they make poetry from them of a very high degree of technical skill. It is good poetry. But it still leaves us attention to pay to this problem of form.

Form is not anything so abstract as a mere ability to play about with a more than able technique. Technique in itself is something, but not everything. It is merely a necessary part of the poet's equipment. Nor is form the ability to attain an always strict and rigid technical standard. The formlessness of the verse of those amateurs I previously referred to is in a great extent due to a lack of technique, but there may be failure, even where technique is assured, failure that can only be put down to lack of vision or limited vision. The failure of accepted poets, where they do fail, is due in each case to different and sometimes individual faults: in each case it can be called a failure in form, but it is in different aspects of form that different poets fail. Thus the apparent formlessness in the poetry of Walt Whitman and D. H. Lawrence is due in large measure to their incomplete technique: they are much more concerned with what they have to say than the way in which they say it. The fact that what they say is of interest and importance saves a great deal of their work from complete failure: it is obvious that they *are* poets. But such a method of writing as theirs in the hands of less brilliant persons leads to poetry that is bad because of its almost inconceivable formlessness. On the other hand, the poetry of Swinburne is an extreme example of the opposite kind of formal failure. There the sheer technique is breath-taking, and for a certain time he can bear you along, "on the wings of song" so to speak; but when it comes to a closer reading, or an attempt to analyse the sense of what you read, it becomes obvious that a great deal of the effect is sheer technique. True form is the blending of the two. Of course, it is too much to expect such supreme success from any poet all the time, and I do not wish to belittle the poetry of those I have taken as examples. It is ridiculous to expect perfection. Even Shakespeare from some points of view was far from good formally: in his book, "The World's Body," John Crowe Ransom analyses some of Shakespeare's sonnets, and points out defects in form in many of

the most famous of them. Such criticism is invaluable. It is good to realise the defects of even seemingly perfect poems, just as it is good for the lover to realise the defects in his seemingly perfect lady. For thereby it is possible for him to appreciate the good qualities the more.

This is not a mere digression. It is close to the subject in hand. The work of Alan Hodge, Norman Cameron and Robert Graves is a serious attempt to achieve a form that is true, and since they are all talented poets they meet with a considerable measure of success. Though they may not like to be so described, they are romantic poets, but they do not use the wildly brilliant language of Swinburne or Dylan Thomas, nor do they use the unregulated dream-language of the surrealists. Their remanticism lies in their subject-matter rather than their treatment of it. They are possessed in various measure by ghosts and legends of the mind. Alan Hodge writes about "The World of Nowhere."

> "Be sure, this world of nowhere will expel
> All who seek here a chance outlandish spell
> That any place could offer just as well."

Norman Cameron writes of "The Wanton's Death."

> "She, wild with wantonness, to her two suitors,
> A merman and a landman, gave this challenge :
> 'To prove his love the sturdier, each abandon
> The element in which his suit was fostered
> And undergo this test of transmutation,
> Merman ashore, landman beyond the breakers'."

And this is Robert Graves' poem, "The Beast."

> "Beyond the Atlas roams a love-beast ;
> The aborigines harry it with darts ;
> Its flesh is esteemed, though of a fishy tang
> Tainting the eater's mouth and lips.
> Ourselves once, wandering in mid-wilderness
> And by despair drawn to this diet,
> Before the meal was over sat apart
> Loathing each other's carrion company."

These extracts serve to show roughly the measure of their achievement, but only roughly. There is much else in the book to amuse and amaze, two things that poetry should frequently do. What limitations their style has are due chiefly to its questionable relevance to exterior reality. I do not myself find it difficult to accept their world, and I enjoy their poetry very much. Robert Graves seems to me one of the best poets of our time, and Norman Cameron a very good one. The only disturbing thing about the work of Alan Hodge is the merest suspicion of an echo from some of Graves' earlier work. But I think this is a book everyone should read, not so much because I myself like and find relevant what

they have to say, as because their particular concern for craftsmanship at this moment is of great importance.

Because Of These (Verses of the Royal Air Force) (Hodder and Stoughton, 3s. 6d.), by Anthony Richardson, is trivial in comparison to the work of the serious writers I have just considered. It is war poetry, very reminiscent of the writing of the war-poets of the last war, Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon. But Mr. Richardson has neither the boyish faith of the one nor the biting sarcasm of the other. However, for those who like rather ephemeral and localised verse, it is quite a good book. But do not expect heroics. The prevailing tone of all the poems is either wistful regret for a peace-time past or more sorrowful and bitter regret for his dead R.A.F. comrades. In "The Message" he writes :

> "Do you remember, Derek, when first we saw
> St. Andrews' graduates passing by a door ?
> An eyehole in an old grey granite wall
> A fountain played beyond, and over all
> The April sun came suddenly to power,
> So all the grey stone blossomed like a flower,
> And one by one, the scarlet student gowns
> Were rubies in the old grey granite crowns.
> There was such loveliness. You quietly said :
> 'Chaps would remember this, though they were dead'."

This reminiscence of St. Andrew's appealed to me somewhat, because for a year I was there myself. No doubt the air force poems will have for many a similar local appeal. But there is nothing very outstanding here as poetry. It is pleasant, if you like pleasant verse, and mildly sentimental, if you like life so. It is better than doggerel, and less good than poetry.

Mr. Masefield's new book, *Natalie, Maisie and Pavilastukay* (Heinemann 6s.), on the other hand, often is scarcely better than doggerel. For instance :

> "Nashy, you're beautiful enough to eat,"
> The Czar exclaimed.

This is from the first poem, a long story in verse about Peter the Great, his Nashy whom he lustily pursues, and her sailor-lover. It goes with a swing, one might say, but it's certainly not poetry, and I doubt if the tale in itself is of much interest, at least not as told in this way. At the beginning Mr. Masefield takes care to explain that "Russian familiar names have often several forms : Natalie, Natasha, Nasha," etc. But one suspects, perhaps unjustly, that this is not really so much a piece of scholarly information as a desire to excuse his versification. Obviously it is nice to be able to use whatever name suits your line. Altogether, I am afraid this piece of Czarist rampaging is not a very delicate compliment to our Soviet ally. But that would not matter so much, were

there anything else to be said for it. The other poem is not so long, but not much better. It ends :

> "Therefore, come any devilry devised
> By things called soldiers serving things called states,
> Destroying all that wisdom ever prized,
> Infecting every mob with all their hates.
> I have a star for when the storm abates
> A cock that crows against the coming day
> England shall live like Pavilastukay."

At the beginning of this poem there is a note : "The name is accented on the third syllable ; it is supposed to mean Ruins in the Wood." At the front of the book Messrs. Heinemann have attached their version of "full fruit standard" by saying "This book is produced in complete conformity with the authorised economy standards." I do not even recommend this book to those who like Reynard the Fox or Masefield's other verse, still less to the admirers of his adventure stories. In fact in all sincerity I can only advise that it goes back for re-pulping. It is a pity that such books are produced at any time, and more than a pity when materials are so scarce, and when so much promising poetry is being written.

Stephen Spender's "Life and the Poet" is interesting chiefly for its appearance in the series of Searchlight Books (Secker and Warburg, 2s.). It certainly establishes him as poetry's No. 1 publicist. But readers of periodicals will already know what to expect. The first chapter, "The position of the Poet," is addressed in a familiar manner to "Left Wing" reader, and is not so much about the position of the poet as about the position of Spender and his friends during the last decade. Needless to say he looks back on this period with something like remorse. It is indeed a damning indictment of the behaviour of Left Wing authors during that time, Spender included, but one is left wondering if the position which he now takes up is any better. Certainly Auden's poetry and Day Lewis' have not improved, but deteriorated, since they have ceased to be communists, and since they have embraced a "wider view" of life. Nor are Spender's own struggles to write a more formal poetry showing any obvious success. For all that, of course, there is much that is true in "Life and the Poet," if there is not much that will be new to those who have followed recent poetry. Perhaps it is necessary that the truth should be restated so often, but it is a little disappointing that Spender does not do it better, and to find that in the end he really has nothing more to say than that "There is only true poetry and false poetry." In his chapter mysteriously titled "The Technique of Living," he makes some extremely tendentious statements, such as that "Shakespeare accepts kingship, aristocracy, the order of the feudal world. He

despises the mob" and ends it with this extraordinary paragraph—extraordinary from a stylistic point of view anyway—"All this does not mean that I ignore the necessity of action. What I do mean is that the consciousness of what we are, can be, and wish to become, both as a society and as individuals, should be maintained at the centre of political action, so that when action has attained its ends, being can be the centre of the flower of the state." The book is reasonably useful: yet it is full of such stuff. Its thesis is roughly that even in these critical times the poet must remain a poet, and above all things not try to be a politician or speak the language of politics. That is all very well, if one could believe that Mr. Spender really meant it, but, though he may have stopped talking like a professional politician, it is difficult to see that he is not talking like a professional publicist. I cannot see where there is any improvement in that. Particularly as his remarks as a publicist for poetry are very strongly tempered with what in the long run is political abuse of those whose cause he espoused when he was a politician. It is like the man who says, "Of course, I am not a soldier," and then proceeds to give you his confidential opinion about soldiery, the implication being, naturally, that, though he is not a soldier of course he knows what is best for soldiers, and in fact all the particulars of how and what they should do, and more particularly, of course, how they have done wrong. It is a curious blindness in Spender that permits him to do this with an air of complete innocence and which permits him also to write such excessively naïve, and almost meaningless commonplaces as: "The writing of poetry is simply one aspect of being alive to-day." One is tempted, when faced by that sort of thing, like a literary hostess in a film, to pat him on the shoulder and reply, "How too, too wonderful! That really is *most* interesting, Mr. Spender." I suppose "Life and the Poet" serves some good purpose, but the reading of books like this has rather an alarming tendency to supplant the reading of poetry itself. For, when you have read it, you can make a fair pretence to knowing the position of poetry to-day without having bothered to read a line of it.

To sum up: the critic is always up against the problem of form; his criticism always may not apply, in the sense that he criticises from his point of view and the poet writes from his. The faults he finds in a poet's form may not be "faults" to the poet, but intentional variations. There is therefore little the critic can legitimately do but indicate his own ideas, and state his opinion. In the long run the reader must read the books for himself, if he cares for poetry, and Stephen Spender's book only makes valuable reading for those who will read present-day poetry for themselves, when they have read it. Of the other books here in question I have sufficiently indicated which I think will best repay atten-

tion. Those that fail do so chiefly owing to their failure to apprehend that poetry is a skilled and difficult craft: they fail to give an adequate form to the poetry they wish to make. As an antidote to this *Work in Hand* is extremely valuable, and all those who believe poetry is an art, and not a haphazard and mechanical arrangement of rhymes and metres, will do well to read it. It is a good book. NICHOLAS MOORE.

THE ARISTOCRATS

I'VE thought for long but cannot see
A reason for the family tree;
When those I have known, the proud the lonely
The nobles of the soul, have only
Clerks for sires, yet sailed away
By sunset light to Nineveh.

I walk with those who are full of grace
Of courteous hand and charming face,
And they are my friends for evermore
Who never have known an ancestor,
But who on an April's Eve have come
By dreamlight to Byzantium.

These are my friends, the lonely and proud,
The sunlit ones, who have sung aloud
When the almond was out on St. Valentine's Day
Or dark arms tossed the yellow hay,
And who on a winter's night have gone
By candlelight to Babylon. JOSEPH GERARD O'CONOR.

SCAMANDER

BY Scamander Paris lies.
Sleeping sound
Careless of Ilium's burning towers,
And chaos round:
To him
The ruin of his world meant less
Than nought
So he
Helen's white fingers might caress.

EVELYN M. FINN.

TRADITION AND MODERNISM IN RECENT VERSE

CONTEMPORARY POETRY can be roughly divided into traditional and modernist, the former more or less touched with classical influences, the latter, well, one might almost define it as romanticism gone bad. All romantic poetry since the Middle Ages has made some sort of bow to the classical, even the old Border Ballad seems to be timidly conscious and respectful of it; but Modernist verse seems to completely ignore or aggressively quarrel with classicism. Of a bunch of poets at my elbow, R. C. Trevelyan is a traditionalist and very classically inclined. That, however, does not mean that he keeps entirely to the old forms, as his new book *Aftermath* (Hogarth Press, 5s.) will bear out, for he sometimes writes in free verse, or a loose blank verse that approaches free verse, but in his themes, his exactness of epithet, his clarity, his simplicity, his avoidance of anything in the nature of symbolism or violence or strangeness, his cautious skill and quiet confidence in various forms of metrical experimentalism, he shows himself very Greek and Latin conscious. The only poet of this century who seems to have influenced him at all is Robert Bridges, the Robert Bridges of the later poems and *The Testament of Beauty*, though the optimism of Bridges is rarely present, and if Trevelyan is not actually a poet of despair, he is no very certain antidote against moral and mental depression, the only bond he has with the modernists, whom he tries to be sympathetic towards, though he is manifestly censorious of them. The main currents of his verse are nostalgia for the Past, sorrowful resignation as regards the desperate Present, and a wistful but not very confident hope in the dreams and exploits of Youth to rebuild. His mind is continually set on classical Poetry and Art and the destruction and disintegration which modern civilization has caused to them. He is a very interesting and readable poet, for though his verse lacks excitement and sensation, it carries the mind along with it, flowing tranquilly and seductively onwards like a meadow-margined southern trout-stream, and some of his poems are in the form of meditative, philosophic letters to his friends: Desmond MacCarthy, Gordon Bottomley, Lowes Dickinson, Virginia Woolf. We read in the preface that the volume contains all that he has written since his *Collected Poems* of 1939, and that a number of the earlier poems have also been included, because all the unsold books of the collected edition were burned in one of the London blitzes.

When we open Stephen Spender's *Ruins and Visions* (Faber and Faber, 6s.) we are in a completely different atmosphere. Though in this book there is an occasional note of poignant feeling and personal grief to which

the heart goes out, for the most part these emotions have given place to bitter criticism and bleak despair. His criticism of attitudes of mind and behaviour associated with the Victorian world is so misunderstanding, so unsympathetic and censorious, that it often becomes rank defeatism, particularly in the poems, "June, 1940," "The Ambitious Son" and "The Fates," though there are arresting lines and passages in all of them, and in "The Fates" Mr. Spender shows a good deal of skill in telling a tale. But he has advanced on his preceding volume of verse, *The Still Centre,* partly in clarity and form, though he is still floundering between two worlds, and very few of his poems are complete expressions of a single unifying emotion. As an example of a passage at its best, take:

> Oh, but supposing that I climb
> Alone to a high room of clouds
> Up a ladder of the time
> And lie upon a bed alone
> And tear a feather from a wing
> And listen to the world below
> And write round my high paper walls
> Anything and everything
> Which I know and do not know!

Here there is certainly a soft, seductive compelling music, but it goes to pieces in the seventh line, "And write round my high paper walls," which is metrically weak because the "quantity" of the monosyllable "round" is too long. Yes, Mr. Spender is applying his hand to conventional metres, as he did in his very promising *Poems* (1933), and every now and again one gets the impression that he is trying desperately hard to be a good traditionalist, but is caught rather too fast in the net of Eliot and his kin. But others who are not modernists creep in. His sonnet "Daybreak" (recently published also in the *Listener*) seems to have been influenced by the sonnet of Charles Williams which begins, "Who shall awaken first, the saucy quean," though it is also touched with the florid technique of Humbert Wolfe. But whatever Stephen Spender's faults and hesitations, he is a much better poet than W. H. Auden, and for that matter always has been, and one continually feels that his boosting of that strange creature came rather from opportunism than conviction, from his desire to strengthen the hands of a prominent member of the narrow clique to which he belonged; for, of course, if two or three similar poets get together and shout each other's praises on every conceivable occasion without any regard to the actual truth, the effect soon becomes devestating, and not only upon weak-opinionated, vacillating critics, but also upon that uncertain section of the poetry-reading public looking curiously over the high wall which to-day severs poets from their public.

Mr. Spender's besetting vices outside his defeatism, are a sort of yawning, dawdling flatness, and a use of extravagant and inconsistent symbols and images, which often result in poetry still-born or ill conceived. Take, for instance :

> Beyond the crisp sea, with lines
> Engraved by winds and keels on glass dunes,
> Perpetually moving and appearing still,
> Tiring the eye with a permanent dance.

Why did Mr. Spender not try to visualise more logically ? Why, for lack of a little care, did he spoil that original description of natural phenomena by the half-cooked image "glass dunes"—which, I suppose, applies to the waves of the sea.

A new book showing the influence of Stephen Spender and other modernists (particularly of their "Ruins") is the third selection of *Poets of To-morrow* (Hogarth Press, 6s.), these being five in number, Lawrence Little, David Gascoyne, Laurie Lee, Adam Drinan, Arthur Harvey. Amongst the new-comers, Arthur Harvey, a tragic-voiced meticulous realist with a fine sense of lucidity and shape in free verse, is by far the most promising. But the one considerable poet amongst them is David Gascoyne, who once called himself "England's only whole-hearted Surrealist," though he is also something of a traditionalist, and probably more under the influence of the French Symbolists than the Surrealists, while the contemporary English poet who seems to have the most influenced him is that bitter satirist, Edgell Rickword, though in form he probably owes something to the experimental verse of the later Robert Bridges. It is strange that he has been so neglected, for he is almost the youngest of our poets of consequence, and sometimes writes with a certain amount of vision and feeling, and often with proper appreciation of shape and form :

> So silent is the ray
> Of naked radiance that lights our actual scene,
> Leading the gaze into the nameless and unknown
> Extremes of this existence where fear's armour falls away
> And lamentation and defeat and pain
> Are all transfigured by acceptance ; where men see
> The tragic splendour of their final destiny.

Yet he can be extremely symbolistic, or fantastical and odd, but he knows exactly what he is doing, whereas three of the five poets of this volume are only groping. Laurie Lee writes in a short preface to his verse, "I find most modern poetry . . . it is smart, polished, epigrammatic and often searching, but it seems to lack the heart of a genuine emotion." Now, of course, that is an almost exact description of the poetry of Pope (or even of Dryden) and to some extent of Gray, but does not

in the least describe characteristic Modern Poetry (by which, I suppose, Laurice Lee means "modernist"), which is all the opposite way round, save that it lacks the heart of a genuine emotion. So it is not astonishing to find in Laurie Lee's own verse an extraordinary condition of quagmire and confusion. But what a pity! For how good he might be if he only understood his background and the nature of the walls which hem him in. Because he has written by far the most memorable short passage in the whole volume:

> A boy is shot with England in his brain;
> But she lies brazen yet beneath the sun,
> She has no honour and she has no fear.

Indeed, it is one of the few memorable passages printed during this war, though it does not appear to have any reference to this war, rather to the earlier war in Spain (the title of the poem is simply "Poem," and gives no clue). True, it is a different kind of memorableness from what we expect, very different from the heartening patriotic memorableness of stanzas in Dorothy L. Sayers' stirring "English War," recently published in *Times Literary Supplement* and Thomas Moult's *Best Poems of 1941*, but the passage bites, glows, and succeeds.

These new poets call themselves "Poets of To-morrow"; but I do not believe it in the least of most of them, unless they develop or greatly change their ways. The good poet writes for an audience as well as for himself and a few queer friends; and the audiences of "to-morrow" will be more democratic, and, therefore, demand clarity, music, simplicity, common-sense, hope, religion and feeling. Now Mary Winter Were, a Catholic poet, supplies to some extent all these qualities in her new little book, curiously enough entitled *To-morrow* (Sands and Co., 2s.). She uses the simplest diction, the plainest words, and yet she is rarely dingy or cheap or common-place. Skill and vision and real feeling walk together in happy union:

> The feet town-prisoned run to greet the hills;
> Wind thrusts the blackened casements to the skies,
> Blows grime and terror on avenging breath.
> It is the hour of peace, a peace that spills
> Back o'er the earth suspended harmonies . . .
> Again, life blossoms from the fields of death.

And she can write stanzas that sing themselves up to Heaven, as in this exquisite little snatch about Mary, the mother of God:

> Her robe is as the blue skies
> That grace Her month of May,
> Her girdle is a daisy-chain
> With which her children play;
> Her robe is as the blue skies when clouds are rolled away.

Another traditionalist is the South African poet, Francis Carey Slater. His little shilling paper-covered volume of war-time poems, *The Distraught Airman* (50 Strand Street, Cape Town), contains some fine things and many memorable lines and phrases. A few of the poems are a selection from his earlier books, published in England by Macmillan and Messrs. Benn. Roy Campbell said of one of them, "A great book. It is as good as anything that has come out of Africa." And the late Lascelles Abercrombie said, "I am astounded that South Africa having at last found its poet should not be more aware of the fact than it apparently is." His "Prayer for South Africa" contains these lines :

> From the eye's red lightning,
> The mouth's black thunder,
> From strife and anger
> Save us, good Lord !

And on every page we get colour and feeling, and often what I take to be a very exact imaginative description of the landscapes and natural phenomena and people of South Africa. And though Mr. Carey Slater's traditionalism occasionally deteriorates into something prosaic and cupboard-dry, here, we ought to feel is a true poet of Tomorrow, one who in supporting tradition will not allow it to grow continuously stale or dull or conventionally uninspired. HERBERT PALMER.

BEAUTY HAS A THOUSAND FACES

BEAUTY has a thousand faces
Airs, expressions and grimaces :
Creatures think to catch her eye
In themselves or in the sky,
In a theorem, in a germ . . .

The poet and the canker-worm
Brothers are, for either knows
The essential beauties of the rose ;
Gardeners can see her breed
In the promises of seed
Womb'd within the living ground
And in a temple, bosom-round,
An eastern potentate expressed
The beauty of his love's left breast :
To the sensuous eye's embraces
Beauty turns a thousand faces.

SUSANNE KNOWLES.

FROM DURBAN TO SUEZ

ON Friday we sailed from Durban, a friendly country
Of rickshaws and laughter, whose white buildings
Lean to the sun and are tall, a land of oranges,
Tomatoes and black servants, of decorous evenings.

It is easy to get lost in the corridors of this large ship
Winding to light brown and cream ; the bewitched voyager
May find himself entering a cinema, stand bewildered in a kitchen
Or captured by wandering music, fair to traveller.

Furious and as certain as History she divides the water,
Alive in her destiny ; strong with the cool assurance
That swept Van Tromp up the Thames and after struggle
Gave to the Silent and Maurice victory in abundance.

The walls of my cabin are lined with mirrors and white leather,
The beds are soft, the lights hidden or shaded ;
Cupids are hoping to haunt here, envious of soldiers
And eager for hours when loves not deaths are paraded.

Now solitary from family or friend these cheerful hearts
Bring help to the journey, mindful always of homes
Lost in a mist, or like Tom the barman
Smile only to serve, in their eyes other days, other times.

(Now serving in the Middle East.) JOHN WALLER.

DEAR THIEF

NOW I have lost the heart that for so long
I guarded with such wary vigilance
Thinking my self-sufficiency as strong
As would suffice in any circumstance,
'Twere purposeless to sigh and wish it back
So subtly was it stolen away—O fool
That would not even recognise its lack
Until immersed in love's translucent pool.
'Tis now beyond my reach and happily
I'll let it bide ; it is too late to learn
New ways with padlocks, keys and chain, and I
Have neither wish nor will for its return.
Thus be my heart in thraldom safely kept
By you, dear thief, who stole it whilst I slept.

B. M. D. COOKE.

DAY-DREAMS

FROM Day—to Dream,
From Dream—to Day . . .
Yet every Day to me's a stream
Of private, precious, priceless Dream . . .

L/Sgt., A.A. School. ALAN SCOTT.

ON SEEING LAMBS LEAPING FOR NO APPARENT REASON

FRISK, you lambs,
Frisk you while you can :
Uncoil your bodies' springs
And leap :
Curl up your form,
Draw in your nobbled legs
And kick them out again.
For soon, you know,
Soon, no longer
You will frisk
And gambol on the down.
Soon, soul-less and serene,
With round and woolly textured form
You'll stand and stare
With dull, unseeing eye
Upon the earth where now you play.
No longer will your youthful soul embrace
A world of green.
No longer light of foot
And glad of heart you'll be
But vanished,
Merged into a life
Of endless apathy.
Shorn you'll be :
Shorn of fleece
And shorn of individual flower :
A unit in a bobbling flock :
Another for the dogs to chase
And hustle to a timber pen.
Lost to us :
Lost to yourselves :

Dissolved by sliding time
Upon an ocean of eternity.

So, frisk you on,
Besport yourselves,
Bleat, tumble, paw and gambol,
Know your joy.
'Tis well
That should I tell you of your end
So close at hand,
You could not understand.

Home Forces. F. M. Queminet.

REQUEST

WHEN I am dead
and my sole resurrection
comes from the dimmer pools of your deep memory
caught in your quiet word,
then speak of me

without
the ponderously lowered voice,
the awe-filled tone,
and the one useless comment
"If I had only known . . ."

Put some slight humanity,
into the thing you resurrect
under my name.
And, remember,
dead or living
I am the same
so, do not try
to put angels' wings upon me
for I never wished to fly.

Speak of me always very casually,
of foods I liked, of silly things I said.
Speak of me sometimes
as if I were living
when I am dead.

Miriam Round.

FOUR TAOIST POEMS

THE great Design is like an empty bowl,
From which one drinks, but never drains the whole.
The great Design is without base or shore;
It is of Heaven and Earth progenitor.
Within It every jagged hurt is dulled;
Each knot, unloosed, each dissonance, resolved;
Within It dimmed all glare, all tumult stilled.
The great Design is like a pool that dries
Not ever. Was It too of greater Size
The Child? Who knows? We cannot plumb it more,
This Nought which lived before the Ancestor.

II

Beautiful on Ugly stands;
Good the price of Bad demands.
Being grows of Not-Yet-Being;
Difficult, of Easy. Freeing
Long imprisons Short. So High
Low decides. Song's melody
Gives to lute-cord harmony.
Front forms Back. Activity
Without action is my way;
Yet my life must not gainsay;
Rear my young, but never own them;
Guide them, yet not lean upon them;
Conquer without victory,
That my own fruits I may see.

III

Stretch a bow to fullest taut,
You will wish that you had not.
Sharpen sword-edge to its keenest,
You will find it dull grows soonest.
Fill your house with bronze and jade,
Then of robbers be afraid.
Wealth and fame presumption breed,
Bringing ruin in their shade.
Your work finished, do not stay.
This, O Earth, is Heaven's Way.

IV

True good is like the water, feeding this
And that alike, but without emphasis.
Disdaining not the low, the humble ground.
To think good thoughts, unveil your most profound;
To love with good intent, use gentleness;
To hold good argument, choose truthfulness;
To rule you well, a neat effectiveness;
To be and do together, timeliness.
The Spirit likes the water-way, for life
Is good indeed, if peace replaces strife.

RUTH TENNEY.

DINING TÊTE À TÊTE

POSSESSIONS rattled and glittered about her.
Long pendants on neck and wrists
Hung there like remnants of lives
She had crushed and twisted;
Bulky rings flashed signals that warned
Of appetite brutal, insatiable,
Under the polished surface.
Her own sharp sparkle, middle-aged,
Now gleamed as relentless will in steely eyes.
Her possessions danced and shone—

All but the son.
Silent, quenched,
He stared at his plate.
Even yet
He dreamed, perhaps,
Of a life of his own.
A life of his own!
Dark hate in him
Had silenced her, too—
But she had her possessions.

New York. ADELAIDE RICHARDSON.

EMBARKATION LEAVE

SO swift, so slow,
The golden, leaden hours
When love held fast the words that love would speak,
And trembling laughter slipt from the edge of tears.

Too vast, too deep
For aught but simple things,
I gathered my unspoken tenderness
And let it flow
Into the making of a homely meal.

And now I know
Why Christ in that deep hour
Before the waves of loneliness closed over Him,
Took bread, took wine
And made of them a sacrament.

His love, His life
Poured into daily things
Men understood; till light came flooding in
And they perceived
His love, His life within the elements.

And this I know—
When sharp, sweet memory
Shall bring the loveliness of all things lost,
You, too, will find
Love's substance in the shadow that it cast.

MARY ENGLISH.

WHEN YOU SMILE

WHEN you smile it is as if a hundred candles
In a curtained twilit room were suddenly lighted,
Or on a dark lonely moor a glowing lamp
Appeared in a seeking hand for traveller benighted,
Or if the searching beam of a friendly lighthouse
By a stranded ship on a stormy sea were sighted.
When you smile it is as if a thousand candles
In a still twilit room were suddenly lighted.

DOROTHY BIRCH.

WELSH STATION

THE hills in this part of the world
Are hard worked and domestic, harrowed
And horse-drawn to their summits.
Slick smooth-pastured hill flanks
Slip into the valleys, usurp the old wild

Strongholds of the long-headed defenders,
Saturnine and slight, who burnt their earth
Before the encroaching east. Borrow
Is buried now beneath black-suit Sabbaths,
Hard cash, alicks and social pretenders.

Robert Owen is buried here, safe under memorial plaque
And out of mind: his words unknown,
Alien as bombs—for the night raiders
Pass by this inner land with other aims,
Their moron wings beating up the dark.

Oh, the countryside is beautiful enough:
Slopes purple with foxgloves, valleys
Breathing the air of treetops, kneedeep
Grasses round the camp. But the
Old nerves are frayed and old sinews stiff.

Rout leaps out of planned retreat—
And liquid vowels, gentle eyes
Merely serve to emphasise
Dolichocephalic defeat.

J. B. Sidgwick.

THE MOON

SHE slides into the sheen,
down the dark green,
deep down to dream . . .
till the waters close
like a rippling rose
above her secret stream.

Giva Dane.

NOCTURNE

RAISE the shutters of mind, my dearest,
You have not forgotten that twilight hour,
The luminous swan floating in space;
The day like a folded flower.

No sound. Only the hollow suck of water
Against the dead bones of a sleeping boat.
The first pale beams, the wan encounter
Of moon on your curving throat.

Waiting. Poised on the inward breath,
Caught in a gentle mesh of fading light,
Drawn in a spun-glass shell of stillness;
The pensive prelude to night.

Now, back in the brittle, throbbing world
With life a coloured web of lies,
I feed my heart on the phantom swan
The riddle of your eyes.

SHEILA HARRISON.

IN TIME OF WAR

THE Saints of God find peace;
These put earth by, and earth's frail love:
Their Love, their God, invulnerable stands
Ever and ever.
Nothing shall tear nor kill,
No glistening moonlight hold
Eternal darkness and all bitterness,
All loss and pain. Only themselves may suffer—
Only themselves know agony, and die.
Such loving cannot crucify with wild
Uncertainty, sicken the heart with dread,
The night with fear;
With one small head so shelterless, so clear
To jeopardy . . .
But who, so bound, shall wish him careless—free?
Earth binds to heaven with love.
The saint, earth-bound, and all-compassionate,
Suffers man's pitiful failure on his heart
As One, long, long ago, suffered
And showed in love the ultimate victory.

DOROTHY MARGARET PAULIN.

SKY GAZERS

ABOUT me shadow-armies mass upon
The frontiers of night. The blood-red sun
Is lying in her grave, and high above
Champagne glass silhouettes are crawling on
High purple velvet.

Now peace is sleeping on the countryside
But from the peaks of painted factories
Men watch the darkened skies with lonely pride
List'ning to the dim rumble overhead
Descending down, down—

Harmonising with the red, deep-throated
Growling of imprisoned machinery
Deep down below. And their hearts well with joy
And their muscles and their long lean tendons
Tense and harden with the madness, the brave
Buccaneering madness of the coming fight.

L.A.C. T. MIDDLETON.

MANUAL

OH hands, be busy when hearts are breaking,
When hours are haunted, asleep or waking,
With apprehension and endless aching.

The one sure anodyne pain can borrow
From life, is work that assuages sorrow
Of dark to-day, or of dread to-morrow.

Work is but prayer of the hands. The grieving,
Can reach far out beyond grief, retrieving,
Holding, building in faith, believing,
Till tears are dried by the fire of living,
The heat of effort, the flame of giving,
And hope reborn from the selfless striving.

Ah, hands, . . . be busy, and heart, be still
And ready. Work for the Great Goodwill,
For mankind struggling up Heartbreak Hill.

San Francisco. KATE RENNIE ARCHER.

WHAT OF THE SPRING?

New Poems by Hartley Coleridge (O.U.P., 10s. 6d.).
The Buried Stream by Geoffrey Faber (Faber, 8s. 6d.).
First Poems by Richard Elwes (Hodder and Stoughton, 3s. 6d.).
Raiders' Dawn by Alun Lewis (Allen and Unwin, 3s. 6d.).

ABOUT a year ago I was asked to admire a friend's study which had been newly decorated. It was a charming room, light and quiet as a study should be, and the walls were painted with gay frescoes which I remember vividly. They represented returning soldiers and sailors, throwing off their uniforms and hastening forward to join the waiting girls gathered round, of all things, a maypole. It was ridiculously precise. The young men had such bright expectant faces as they discarded their bandoliers or their Nelson's collars. The girls were so young, so anxious to begin the dancing. It reflected a world at once gay, and inevitable. Even an occasional daisy somewhere down by the wainscott seemed to have arrived by no chance or accident, but according to some carefully arranged plan.

This country has now been at war for two and a half years, and we have had time to examine our attitude to warfare. We may expect that the statement of poets and thinkers will now become increasingly definitive as their attitudes grow clear. For warfare is not a professional secret, known only to the members of a particular guild. It is the most exclusively amateur of all human activities. Your professional soldier is a peace-time phenomenon. He is ousted from his trade by tinkers, tailors and candlestick-makers the very moment that war is declared. It is we, the tinkers and tailors of this generation who hold war's secrets, and it is we, the amateur soldiers, who can both probe its causes and shape its destinies.

It is, I think, more simple for us, than for our fathers in the last German war. They were born and had grown up as civilians persuing the ways of peace. We have lived always in the shadow of war. Their peaceful world was suddenly beset with evil, and they rushed indignantly to arms against the monster. Our world was not suddenly beset. The evil had always been with us. We took arms at last with reluctance and without illusions.

It has frequently been offered as an apology for contemporary poetry that the poets of this war are disillusioned. There could be no more absurd excuse, if excuse were needed. There can be no disillusion where there has never been illusion, and I doubt whether anyone of my generation has had any illusions about war. Our fathers certainly, and with them the poets of their time, went to war with songs. Their attitude

was heroic. They carried the Sword of Justice, and it was wreathed with flowers. We, two and a half years ago, went to war in silence. Our attitude was scientific. We had diagnosed a cancer, and we carried not a sword but a scalpel. We have therefore no "corner of a foreign field" mystique; we do not need to garland our tanks with roses, and to do so would be manifestly absurd. We have set out carefully and concisely to remove from the body of our time a root of disease, and if we hold to our purpose, the matter will be carefully and concisely completed. We shall then cease to be amateur surgeons and return to our professional role of citizen, anticipating, not a modern Utopia conjured miraculously from the mud and poppies of Flanders, and especially designed for heroes, but simply the probability that we shall be able to continue the process of evolution in better health, with more energy and with fairer chances of success because a necessary operation has been performed and a source of infection removed.

That I think is why the frescoes in my friend's study have remained so vividly in my mind. The men in those pictures are not returning to Utopia, nor are they returning as heroes. They are returning to the world they left, and by simply throwing off their uniforms they are returning as their familiar selves. Yet there is still a difference. It is to be found in the maypole and the daisies, but especially in the faces of the citizens. There is health and eagerness. The operation has been performed. There is spring in the air and the body is vigorous.

Such, stated rather baldly, is my own attitude, such is my hope. In myself these are so urgent and so concise that I tend to seek a similar awareness in everything around me. Especially, I find my reading nowadays divides itself very sharply into the haves and have-nots, the books which contain some awareness of the genius of the time, or which are written in the health and springtime of the spirit (I do not suggest that the spring is only flowers) and those in which the old slough of winter is obtaining still.

It is for these reasons that the poems of Hartley Coleridge have recently charmed and delighted me. This Peter Pan of the nineteenth century, who though reared and fostered in the exacting tradition of his father, and of Wordsworth and Southey, and without any major poetic talent, yet retained an individuality which has both sweetness and truth. It is as though he saw the world with the eyes and the heart of a child, and what he saw he loved, not with the detached subjectivity of Wordsworth, nor with the contemplative intellectuality of his father, but with a warm and spontaneous affection born of immediate personal experience. His poems are radiant with health, and frequently attain the direct truthfulness of a child's wisdom.

But what is Freedom ? Rightly understood
A universal license to be good.

The debt of modern poetry to Mr. Geoffrey Faber is immense and his memorial as a true lover of poetry is already established. His own work will not die quickly and his poems of the last war are certainly as good as the poetry of his more widely advertised contemporaries. But I cannot find the spring in this poetry. Its attitude is heroic and it belongs, as I think Mr. Faber would himself admit, to the past. There is mystery, fear of the unknown, and courage in this poetry, qualities which cannot belong to the poetry of to-day. And there is the exaltation of 1915 :

Bloody-minded fate
Strips us to the savage skin and sets us stark
In the black winds and frore
Adrift upon a sea that has no charted shore.

Exactly the same is true of the poems of Richard Elwes. Their whole attitude is traditionally heroic, and seems unreal when set against the uncomprehending and somewhat fearful cheerfulness of Dunkirk.

Then welcome, these redeeming agonies,
These ardours and assaults, this fiery faith
And all the purifying blaze it brings,
This part of champion and this march with Death !

To me, whether as soldier or as poet, this carries no conviction. It's like the spirit of Courtly Love at a board meeting, or Launcelot elected chairman of the L.P.T.B. Mr. Elwes has a well developed poetic talent and I would ask him (though he will probably consider me impertinent) to write what he *sees* and *knows*, rather than sentiments which a liberal education has taught him to think proper in the circumstances. *Country Life* and the *Times* will probably no longer print his work, but that fact should be no measure of its value.

It is a relief to turn from these traditional heroics to the simple directness of Alun Lewis. I had seen Mr. Lewis' work in "Poems from the Forces" and had liked it, and was therefore anxious to read his book. Here is a true poet of this war, writing of what he sees and feels with a restraint which is convincing, and carries the hallmark of quality.

And we talked of girls, and dropping bombs on Rome,
And thought of the quiet dead and the loud celebrities
Exhorting us to slaughter, and the herded refugees ;
Yet thought softly, morosely of them, and as indifferently
As of ourselves or those whom we
For years have loved, and will again
To-morrow maybe love ; but now it is the rain
Possesses us entirely, the twilight and the rain.

Anyone who wishes to know how one poet has felt during this war should read these poems. They are sincere and perfectly in accord with the scientific spirit of the times. Here is no hero, defending the shores of England against the slavery of barbarians. We see only a young man intent on performing an act which circumstances have rendered necessary, and who, meanwhile, finds waiting dull. Afterwards he will go home with Peace.

And she comes from the dead
Smiling, without mystery
Homeward slowly returning
Century by Century.

ALAN ROOK.

SINGING TO THE DEAD

I PASSED a graveyard—quiet and grey
In the fading light of the winter day,
And a blackbird sang from an ebony tree,
But his song was not for me.

He sang to the dead who were sleeping there
In the long, long silence; without a care
Or a thought for the world that passes them by
Under a darkening sky.

Once they laughed in the light of the sun
Loved and wept ere their race was run
Now sleep has found them—deep as the sea
But a blackbird sings from an ebony tree,
Singing of summer—of loveliness fled,
He sings his song to the dead.

MARJORIE D. TURNER.

THE HAWTHORN WOOD

I DO not know how long the dead remember,
I do not know how much they even care;
But should you still recall the hawthorn wood
You will be wrong to dream that I am there.

Once, but once only have I walked that way
Since you outstript the autumn wind and rain,
But finding it too much for my heart's peace
I have not been again.

CYNTHIA PALMER.

WINTER WOOD

THE last leaf falls, a tremulous tear
Against a sky that greyly broods,
Is lost, and leaves my listening ear
Unquiet with eerie quietudes.
The trees, bereaved, with arms upstretched,
Are moveless in a mute lament,
An elegy in twigs, deep etched
Upon a stony firmament.

Withdrawn, the trees stand tense and still,
The mist veiled skies grow vaguely deep
And outer space flows in to chill
These aisles whose dear familiars sleep.
Each well-loved path, frequented glade,
In silence seems to turn from me
As one who, impious, has strayed
Unshriven, to Eternity.

No more these leafless groves enshrine
The Summer's kindly deities
But out-worn gods that brood, malign
As dark subconscious memories.
Dim, mindless Things, unsepulchred
To sink again, as snowdrops spring,
'Neath thickets where no mating bird,
Even in April, stays to sing.

H. W. HARDING.

WHEN SILENCE FALLS

WHEN silence is unfurled
Like the petals of a flower,
Lovely and dew-empearled
Around a weary world,
In the dark midnight hour.

Then all things lost or strayed
Are gathered 'neath its fold,
All joys with crowns arrayed,
All tears by sleep allayed,
All sorrows shrined in gold.

IRENE H. LEWIS

PRAYER OF THE HOMELESS

THOU dwellest not in temples made with hands
Yet Thy love understands
How close the human spirit clings
To dear, familiar, irreplaceable things ;
And Thou dost know
What long years and what lovely graces go
To shape one home—and see, a lifetime's treasure
Ground into powder for the Devil's pleasure.

The young can build anew, they have their scheming,
Their brave, impossible plans to keep them sane ;
But what of us ? We are too old for dreaming ;
Too old to build again ;
Too old to learn to share another's fire ;
That which we loved and is not is our whole desire.

When from sore-needed rest there comes a waking
Show us no glittering pavements, gracious God,
But neat small gardens of our own proud making,
Ablaze with dahlias and with golden-rod.
O if we could but come,
No matter by what long or lonely way,
Each to his own loved home !
Lord of the many Mansions, grant we may.

ENID M. NORMAN.

LOSS

WHEN you have gone I shall behold the land
Whose shade now falls upon my inward sight ;
The country, while you live, to me is banned ;
The shadow fades, it has no bulk, as night.
That time it will no longer fade away
But from these dear familiar things be wrought ;
This sky, these trees and fields that make this day
Be substance then, for this dim realm of thought.
Beloved scenes still press upon my fear
Their sweet assurance of its empty shade ;
But thence will on my every dream appear ;
Into these fields, these flowers, your face will fade.
Bereft, to other scenes may I have fled ;
These, you have loved, must not proclaim you dead.

JOYCE M. LLOYD.

THE TRIUMPH

WE waited long for Summer
Through Winter cold and dark;
She was a tardy comer
But now we hear the lark,
There's honey in the comb,
And we go forth in triumph,
With songs of joy and triumph
To convoy Summer home.

The night seemed never-ending,
We seldom saw the sun;
But now the flowers are bending
Before the day is done—
So late the stars begin—
And we may lead in triumph,
With dancing and with triumph,
Our Lady Summer in.

Fog was a sullen matron
Who frowned on all delight,
But now St. John's our patron,
And Barnabas the bright,
And unto them we pray
To look upon our triumph
And bless us in our triumph
Our Summer festal day.

D. E. C. Tomlin.

IN THE STRANGERS' GALLERY

WITH awestruck eyes, I looked down where
Sat Mr. Speaker in his chair.

On either hand there could be seen
Great statesmen on the benches green;

Their brows were lined with problems deep.
(I think I saw one fast asleep.)

Three clerks sat stolid in a row
Arrayed in wigs as white as snow,

And staring each one in the face
Across the Table lay the Mace.

Through solemn panes came softly stealing
Dim painted light, the place revealing :

And day-dreams, dreams of what might be
There in the twilight came to me.

. . . . . .

I saw a second Cromwell purge
The House of dross as with a scourge,

I saw a Parliament of kings,
Not puppets pulled by hidden strings ;

Of kings of men, in their own right :
A Peoples' leaders in the fight.

From North and South and East and West
Each town and hamlet sent its best.

They came an eager, earnest throng
With but one aim, to right each wrong ;

To free the realm from lust and greed ;
To raise the low, to ways that lead

To higher things and nobler ways ;
To bring God's sun to darkened days.

. . . . . .

I saw before that fervid band
The dark clouds roll from off our land.

Disease and poverty no more
Our England shamed from shore to shore.

And sunbeams cleft the brows of might,
And Justice walked in robes of light

No longer blinded, but with eyes
Deep-gazing, kindly, gentle, wise.

. . . . . .

Like mists at sunrise, on that day
All doubts and fears were swept away :

Old Privilege was damned, and men
Were as God made them . . . gods : and then . . .

The guns roared, and I woke ; . . . my dream
Alas ! A brief November gleam.

Wolverhampton. WILLIAM BOOTH.

TO THE MUSICIANS

GRIND and hammer, mould and beat,
Fashion in the furnace heat.
Hands, forget that you have played
Fugue, andante, serenade;
Haunting, swiftly changing keys,
Half a hundred symphonies.
Grip the iron, chill as ice,
Rasp and shape it in the vice.
Grudge the time you take for breath,
Spare no space for life and death.
Numb the senses, dull the brain,
Kill emotion, drug the pain.
Patent every Ixion wheel,
Crucify on shining steel.
All the music-making host,
Loathe the things you cherish most.
Sanctify your soul in oil,
Drink a sacrament of toil.
Deafen every harmony,
Discord, reign eternally!

MARGARET HENDERSON.

B.B.C.

WHEN daylight dies, and soft the firelight falls
And vision wakes, the day's adventure done
Comes music, and the separative walls
Of mind dissolve beneath its benison.
Now, like a robe of gold the tide of sound
In splendour floods the furrowed shores of care;
Now, like a midnight rose in moonlight drowned
Hangs like a perfume on the listening air.
The self, a braggart cloudlet in the sky
That stains the sun's eternal aureole,
Dies on the singing winds of ecstasy
That lift the surging pinions of the soul.
Then why, when in the million hearted flame
The minds of men superlatively blend,
Why must the impious voice of time proclaim
The news, the moment's news of foe and friend?
For music sings of old, eternal things,
Of harmony ere rivalry began.

The news is of the earth; in music sings
The golden-voiced imagining of man.

If music were the language of the mind
And hate were smoothed to silence, then no more
Would news be news of death, and man would find
The hearth and home of joy, and leave behind
The starved and grey futility of war.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

MALTA BY DAY

HOT sunshine blazing on the white stone walls
And the long dusty road that runs between
Their crevices in which the lizard crawls,
Now motionless, darting away if seen,
The wilting carob trees, the bare brown hills,
Beneath the blue intolerable sky
From whose unclouded arc the sunlight spills,
Old palaces that rear their towers on high,
Domed churches, solemn bells that fill the air,
Rare cyprus groves, and everywhere the sea,
This is a land I once found very fair,
A land whose memory abides with me.
Now in its fiery trial I see it yet,
Guardian of hours I never can forget.

MALTA BY NIGHT

NIGHT! A magnificent and mounting moon,
The moon of Malta, silver on the sea,
A moon of memories so dear to me
They haunt me still, an echoing, far-off tune.
Let them come to me ever as a boon,
Sharp shadows of each wall, each house, each tree,
Where the white light holds fairyland in fee,
Far from the sunshine and the blaze of noon.

The little streets are quiet in the town,
Only a solitary footstep heard,
Only a brown robed monk lost in the shade,
All else is peace. And here I will sit down
And muse awhile and try to find some word
Fit for a world so wonderfully made.

J. SACKVILLE MARTIN.

THE PATH OF LIFE

"Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita."

Sit down, brother neighbour, take rest
For very weary is the way we tread.
The thorns, the tear-test,
Deceit and bitterness and wrong,
The hatred of the throng,
The heavy toil, the scanty bread,
Soberly, steadfastly,
All was gone through
Without lament or rue
For many years.

. . . . .

We have a long way yet to walk
Before we reach the end,
We have to sweat for longer yet
And weep, dear neighbour friend.

And we shall falter on the way
And fall, and rise again
All bruised, and try to shuffle on
Bones broken, all in pain.

On our weakened spine
The length and toil of the long road
We first began so cheerfully,
Has gathered heavily as a load.

My strength would have bowed down
Under the burden of the past
Were it not I have scope to hope
Bright days are coming fast.

Oh hope! it is a blessed thing!
It buoys us up in this life's dark sea,
And but for it the fate of Man
Would truly wretched be.

. . . . .

So now that the sun has gone down
And the darkness of evening
Has brought round the time of our rest,
Friend lie we down and forget our life,
Forget the road with toil and sorrows rife
And the tears we shed.
So to-morrow, just with the break of day,
At the call of the sun
We shall wake refreshed, our homes restored
And without dismay
We'll take up together again the run
Of the road that stretches indefinitely far.

Arthur Vassallo, of one of whose poems the above is a translation, is a young Maltese poet. He has written little, but that little is very nearly first-rate. The sadness of tone and the soberness of imagery in the present are common to several of his poems and it may be said that these qualities constitute his characteristic manner. A small volume of verse, "Dell ta' l-Imghoddi" (The Shadow of the Past), 1936, is his only published work.

In the translation my principal care was to make a faithful interpretation of the musical motif, so to speak, of the poem. Of course, I have also kept close to the meaning of the words. But I did sacrifice unimportant shades of meaning to the main end proposed, and I would translate the metrically irregular beginning and close in a greater number of lines than they have in the original had I so required, which I didn't. And I have not taken pains to measure out lines the length of the original and to distribute my rhymes as the Maltese poet did. No such liberty was taken with the middle part and I have translated it in a jogging rhythm, as was deamnded by the poem.

Readers will remember J. Aquilina's article, "The Maltese and their Poetry," in the January-February number of The Poetry Review. The extracts he quoted were taken from Poètes Maltais by Laurent Ropa, the only translation of Maltese poetry in any language. I am making a translation of some of the best specimens of which others besides this will appear in The Poetry Review, *editore volente*.

Gozo, Malta. Marcel Mizzi.

WHAT IS A POEM?

This is the title of Marguerite Edgelow's article (in your April issue), which I found very interesting, may I thank her for it ? The Amen of Nature is to me a Seed, the power to carry on life. It is this living quality that I desire to find in poetry. Is there creative life in the verse, does it give inspiration. When I had finished Marguerite Edgelow's article, I sat down and wrote :

I think a poem a seed should be
Holding life,—no simile—
Which is found by those who dare
Plant the seed with loving care.

Fling a stone into a lake
It will sink by its dead weight
Plant a bulb in garden pool
Flowers shall grow from water cool.

Through an age of toil and stress
Shall be born true loveliness
As the petals open wide
See the wondrous life inside.

Hold a poem in your heart
Keep it there till tear-drops start
Cast it forth and it shall be
A living thought of life from thee.

That is what I want from poetry, something vital, something beautiful, something costly. Are we receiving these gifts to-day ? On the whole I think we are.

Middleton, nr. Manchester. E. M. Harrison.

A MAGICAL VERBAL JUGGLER

WHAT very powerful things are words in the hands of Walter de la Mare. They become more than powerful things, they become a cross sectional picture of life in all its varying moods and changes: something akin to an essential of existence, a fundamental of creative power.

There is a versatility too which scores a triumph. He is equally deft at describing some vernal dream as he is at painting the macabre, which he does with an enchanting and somewhat ironical zest and vigour. His is a singular and sometimes frightening imagination. Every couplet is an instance of whole-hearted feeling thrown into a verbal tableau. He revels in his lines, racing them down in an almost glutinous manner. A profound and very wonderful appreciation of a scene, an episode, a character.

"Collected Poems" (Faber), is an anthology of Walter de la Mare's work from the more recent times back to the earlier collections. All are included, except the poems for children, which are to appear in a later volume. Here we meet such old favourites as "The Listeners," "The Wanderers" and "Motley." It is good to see them once more and to recall the memories they bring back.

Of the earlier works time has taken no toll, nor has it robbed them of any of their inherent magic. Walter de la Mare is timeless. His work bridges that wide and rather dangerous gap between the Victorians and the present day. He has an answer for Tennyson and another for Auden. His work is a happy blend of the two: a feat which in the hands of a lesser artist would be an unhappy and disastrous attempt at compromise, a lamentable falling between two stools.

To return again to the subject of Walter de la Mare's versatility. He spreads before one a pastoral fantasy; then, leaving this mood, he assumes a touch of Hogarth. For instance:

> "His bloodless hands entalon that iron rail.
> He gloats in beastlike trance. His settling eyes
> From staring face to face rove on—and quail.
> Justice for carrion pants; and these the flies."

Can't you see Hogarth devouring such a verse with all the eagerness of an artist finding verbal inspiration? What a rich portrait of the wretch—so cruel, so sharp, yet so disconcolate!

He is however, at his best when dealing with the more pastoral theme. This one I liked particularly, a compact symphony of legendary questioning:

"Who beckons the green ivy up
Its solitary tower of stone ?
What spirit lures the bindweed's cup
Unfaltering on ;
Calls even the starry lichen to climb
By age long inches endless Time ?

His talent for creating myth is very apparent in this work. In fact, throughout the volume one has the impression of each everyday incident being backed up by some legend ; an analytical survey of the origin of incident based on mythology. This is very pleasing : it introduces an age old tradition and a fanciful magic which fit in with the timeless element of Mr. de le Mare's work.

Another feature is the refinement of his gift for a verse précis. He has established this as a very fine art and can do more with few words than many can do with volumes. He cuts his cant without diminishing the quality—a rare gift these days. What more aptly descriptive than this of Napoleon :

"What is the world, O soldiers ?
It is I ;
I, this incessant snow,
This northern sky ;
Soldiers, this solitude
Through which we go
Is I."

A compact, impressionistic, psychological study, told in a snapshot-like manner. What a power for presenting character and what a creation which can manufacture an atmosphere so intensely real and yet so deliriously fictitious that it creates warmth or shivers, fear or joy.

There are some sights and sensations which I find utterly satisfying and enthralling. The scene from the top of a mountain after a hard three hours' climb, the combination of wind and light on water, the satisfaction of completing work which pleases. You know how it is ? That complete and utter contentment such as Rupert Brook understood. Mr. de la Mare's verse is of this ken. Little can surpass the completeness, the flow and descriptive atmosphere of his work, so that after reading a few pages of "Collected Poems" one lays it down with a sigh and feels a rarefied contentment.

In this review I fail to criticise, I merely praise. That is because there is so much worthy of acclaim that anything else looks small and worthless beside it. To seek fault would be a purely negative and rather sordid business. I consider "Collected Poems" an essential to every student of verse and lover of the poet's art, a blend of deep maturity

together with a delight of incident whose freshness is almost akin to childhood. This book is vital. That link between two generations—a school on its own and an essential stepping stone in the progression of verse. The result of forty odd years as a writer, and what a forty years! Scaffolding to an art which war seems to be endangering and a milestone which at the moment is vital and soon will become historic.

To quote more of Mr. de la Mare's work to illustrate the quality would be to reprint the volume. I salute this as a great, dignified and truly magnificent collection. RICHARD GARRETT.

SERBIAN NATIONAL POETRY

The Revolt of the Serbs Against the Turks, 1804-1813, is the prosy, unilluminating title of a timely collection of translations from the Serbian national ballads of the period (with an exhaustive introduction) by Dr. W. A. Morison, lecturer in comparative Slavonic philology, University of London (Cambridge University Press, 8s. 6d.) It is pertinent to note that throughout all the course of Serbian history the outstanding events have been recorded in song, and chanted to the contemporary and following generations to the mournful notes of the *gusle* or one-stringed fiddle. These songs contain supernatural and mythological elements such as are always to be found in folk-epics, but they give a fascinating picture of the history of the Serbs from the twelfth century onwards, and would be of interest even if they lacked the lyric beauty which forms their chief claim to attention and study. In spite of the effects of imitation and the influence of written literature, the later epics retain much of the character of the older poems. The present translations are of poems a little more than a century old. These have never been translated into English elsewhere, although several collections of Serbian national poetry have been published, notably the *Ballads of Marko Kraljevic* (C.U.P., 1922), and *Serbian Ballads* (Kosovo Day Committee, London, 1916). The present definite series, containing many passages of high poetic beauty in relief of the ghastly horror and grim humour abounding in the herioc battle pieces, are very effectively and strikingly rendered in the regular trochaic line of ten syllables. Apropos the present agonizing experiences of a gallant people we have received from MARY FRERE an original, well-written

SONG OF A SERBIAN WOMAN, 1942

Little did I think there would ever be ought
At which I could gladly smile to see it stand
Between my love and me.
Take, of mountain, this my heart and keep it hid
In your snow-clad breast to beat above the guns
A message, throbbing, clear,
Telling him that I would have nought else beside
Glorious tears, while he yet fights to free the soil
We love. And proud am I.
Let a bullet swiftly from the invaders hand
Strike out my day at noon ere it should fade
To share a traitor's night.
Hide from my love's eyes that last woeful sight,
As from mine the stain of his life's young blood;
Oh mountain, stand between.

Shalter then with towering strength that place where he
Ever still must lie; and let my heart remain
To share a hero's grave.
But when victory comes, if hand in hand we climb
Searching your bared breast, then in your rare sweet flowers
I'll find again my heart.

"The Passionate Shepherd"

Inquiries have been received concerning the authorship of "The Passionate Shepherd" and other details of its history. A complete answer is provided by that doyen of Elizabethan critics and erudite Marlowe scholar, Dr. F. S. Boas, in his *Christopher Marlowe; A Biographical and Critical Study*, Clarendon Press, 1940, in which he states:

"Unlike Lyly before him and Shakespeare and Jonson after him, Marlowe did not write songs to fit aptly into the action of his plays. The one lyric that we can identify from his pen is more notable for its associations than its content, though it has its own silvery charm. It is the set of four-lined stanzas entitled, 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love'... With three other stanzas these are printed in the anthology 'England's Helicon' (1600), with the signature, Chr. Marlow. The first three stanzas (with some variants) and one of the others had already appeared, without title or signature, in 'The Passionate Pilgrim' (1599). This volume bore Shakespeare's name on the title-page, but it was a miscellaneous collection, and Marlowe's stanzas were included in the second part, which had a separate title, 'Sonnets of Sunday Notes of Music.' But though not written by Shakespeare, they were certainly known to him, for he makes Sir Hugh Evans in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' III.i, sing some of the lines in a maudlin mood, when he has 'A great dispositions to cry,' scarcely a compliment to the 'dead shepherd'....

"More of a compliment, though a left-handed one, was paid by Raleigh when he wrote a 'Reply' to the shepherd's invitation in the same metre and in answering phrases....

"The 'Reply' was printed, together with Marlowe's poem, in 'England's Helicon'. They were both published together in a broadside, preserved in 'The Roxburghe Ballads' (i.205), printed by the assigns of Thomas Symcock, between 1618 and 1629. In a commonplace book kept by John Thornborough (1551-1641), successively Dean of York and Bishop of Worcester, there is an additional ante-penultimate stanza....

"This might have been looked on as an interpolation had not Izaak Walton, who introduces the poem into 'The Compleat Angler' (1653 and 1655), added a similar stanza in the second edition:

Thy silver dishes for thy meat
As precious as the gods do eat,
Shall on an ivory table be
Prepar'd each day for thee and me.

Walton puts it into the lips of a milkmaid, as 'that smooth song which was made by Kit Marlowe, now at least fifty years ago'.... The nearest parallels to the song in Marlowe's plays are to be found in 'Dido,' especially in the Nurse's invitation to Cupid (IV.V.4-12). But pastoralism does not sit easy on Marlowe."

We may add that besides Raleigh's "Reply," there is a parody by Donne, "The Baite" (Poems, edited Grierson), and an analogous piece by Herrick, "To Phillis to love, and live with him"...

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCII

A sixth book of poems by Paul Engle receives an eager welcome. The Poetry Review considered "Corn" in September-October, 1939. How fortunate are some of us: with early travelling, Engle furnished his ready mind, ready to tell us of his findings through the permanent medium of good poetry.

Early in *West of Midnight* (Random House, New York), we find "America, 1941": we give the second stanza:

I cannot ask my tongue to cheat the eye,
Naming alone the mounting meadowlark
When the blue bird-way gleams where the bombers fly.
I will not range in any measured time
Only the child's night cry, dreading the dark,
The wind's voice varied with the altering suns,
When the true sound and temper of our time
Is the gigantic arrogance of guns.

A breath-taking poem is "Kaarlo in Finland," quoting from it:

I only know, with history, that nothing
Done by hate is worth a man's daring.

Kaarlo, the world crawls in time, but a man's
Life is a quick lunge through marvellous light.
To-morrow runs from our hands like river water.
A man's a fool to want of the future more
Than luck of weather or the glad warmth of a girl.
Nothing's sure but our death, and its day unsure.
Your letters came, long on the way, censored,
Date but no town, scrawled on the dangerous front.
I put them here as comfort to myself,
Warning the world that what we all need more
Than hope or courage is a steady heart.

It causes no surprise to the reader find another expressive poem to "Mary":

Once I was content
All night long to walk
Wondering what you meant
By silence or by talk.

Next I believed that all
A man could understand
Was touching, at your call,
Your brown, heart-beating hand.

To-day, so close have we
Shaped each to his own kind,
I look at the same tree
And know what's in your mind.

Any listing of the foremost poets of our day omitting the name of Paul Engle is grievously at fault.

On the road of poetry we encounter poet-Tasters—the would-be's and the never-will-be's—but when we meet, passing by the pigmies, a giant, the good winds

of sincerity and power blow through the mind. It is as if a great light breaks through the halls of literature. Such a voice is Robinson Jeffers'.

A lengthy poem is apt to be a burden—Poe has said: "There is no such thing as a lengthy poem." In *Be Angry at the Sun* (A Random House Book), the smoking confusions and realities of sex are set forth in this lengthy treatise poetic, entitled *Mara*. The story is not set in the cynical qualifications of "society" but in a less evolved strata of humanity—it is a work of art and human history. The background is Jeffers' own home setting, "and Monterey Bay sparkling with light where a hundred fishing boats lay at their moorings and the long curve of beach fainted in a bright haze fantastic Carmel village."

The poets of the hour strive to give to the printed page something of the terror of this crisis, world crisis. Perhaps no one has done it better than this poet. Toward the end of Mara's story, we are concerned with a man named Ferguson, who has just hung himself under a beam in the barn and the recorder says

He will now no longer
Bawl for the truth, the truth, though it were poisonous,
Nor feel two thousand years of instruction sag underfoot
Like a rotted floor.

. . . . .

Did he imagine time could stand still?
The cause is far beyond good and evil,
Men fight and their cause is not the cause.

We find shorter poems that grip the mind and heart. The "House Dog's Grave" celebrates Haig, an English bulldog. It is difficult to read this without crying. The first and the last of this exquisite tribute follow:

I've changed my ways a little; I cannot now
Run with you in the evenings along the shore,
Except in a kind of dream; and you, if you dream a moment,
You see me there....
You were never masters, but friends. I was your friend.
I loved you well, and was loved. Deep love endures
To the end and far past the end. If this is my end,
I am not lonely. I am not afraid. I am still yours.

What woman would not be deeply grateful for so fine a statement as is contained in the poem "For Una." We quote from it:

I built her a tower when I was young—
Sometime she will die—
I built it with my hands, I hung
Stones in the sky.

Old but still strong I climb the stone—
Sometime she will die—
Climb the steep rough steps alone,
And weep in the sky.

Never weep, never weep....
We have seen the human race
Capture all its dreams,
All except peace.

We have watched mankind like Christ
Toil up and up,
To be hanged at the top....

It is not Europe alone that is falling
Into blood and fire.
Decline and fall have been dancing in all men's souls
For a long while....

To-night, dear,
Let's forget all that, that and the war,
And enisle ourselves a little beyond time,
You with this Irish whiskey, I with red wine,
While the stars go over the sleepless ocean,
And sometime after midnight I'll pluck you a wreath
Of chosen ones; we'll talk about love and death,
Rock-solid themes, old and deep as the sea,
Admit nothing more timely, nothing less real
While the stars go over the timeless ocean,
And when they vanish we'll have spent the night well.

Alethea Todd Alderson, has met many honours in her writing life. As readers' adviser in fiction at the Washington, D.C. Public Library she illustrated the dignity of her poetic gift. This new collection *This Thing Called Peace* (Kaleidograph Press, Dallas), is made up of recent poems, most of them expressions of her deep feelings on the subject of war and world affairs. Her expression "The Tale of Two Cities, 1941," has been much applauded.

Quoting from a letter recently received from Miss Alderson:

"The things of the spirit are being challenged now as never before by the cruelty and evil forces of the world, and surely in such a tragic era a poet should have something to say, something worth saying, or be silent. What is reflected in my poetry of my philosophy is from deep conviction, not mere shallow optimism, that 'somehow, *Good* will be the final goal'."

A fine sonnet brings to our sight the National Gallery at Washington:

The genius of great centuries long past
Burns bright with life in this perpetual hall;
The glory of the age of faith at last
To this young nation brings its clear, far call.
Frail, mortal hands, now dust, that painted here
The innocence of childhood and its faith
Were laid in benediction without fear
Upon the world's sad heart to conquer death.
Art is eternal. Hate and fear will die,
Dark cruelties lie down with perished things,
But beauty lives for ever to defy
The wear of time and all the wreck it brings.
Beyond and far beyond this warring day
Art speaks to Life its everlasting "Aye!"

In the January-February number of 1940, we reviewed Mrs. Florence Hamilton's first book, *A Moment's Monument*. Mrs. Hamilton is a woman concerned with

splendid occupations and preoccupations and perhaps the reviewer's task is more confusing when one knows well the writer.

Compressed within less than 50 pages in *Mirrors and Human Voices* (James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.), is a wealth of expression and understanding. One catches the fragrance of this poet's garden at Wellesley and her reverance for the sea. We will turn to :

Women have watched for men down many roads,
Look now across the gray sea for their sail,
Hear in the wind a last despairing wail,
Know how the deep tide alters their abodes.
Now clouds go westward with their stormy loads,
The hills reach up to darkness with high hands,
The seabirds wheel above the fading lands—
I fear some desperate destiny forebodes.
The wind is like a howling on the night
As of all souls who drowned in sight of land ;
And on this final shore, this haggard height,
Here at this last place where the feet can stand,
Suddenly I am riven with alarms—
What if to-night my love sleeps in those arms !

With many of the gallant of many nations going down into the sea, especially compelling is this dramatic picture. Joseph Auslander prefaces these pages with a fine appreciation of Mrs. Hamilton's gift. Quoting from the Foreword :

"Doubtless from Mrs. Hamilton's years of close association with Edwin Markham as his private secretary did much to quicken and confirm faith in the essential dignity of man .... Here, then, is a brave book that runs the gamut of life and death with the old eternal verities between ; testament of faith in the future, come what may."

"Blackbirds" carry the reader into the garden :

The heron mist takes flight, the earth
Is once more Eden new !
The tree-top squirrel in suit of fur
Now takes his morning view.
Tailored and white a rabbit scuds
Across the smoking grass ;
The hills put on their gold again ;
A flock of blackbirds pass
Miraculous with life—a loud
Sensual brawling thieving cloud
That every morning fills the boughs
Of the field's one leafless tree—
(O may they, on grave Yggdrasil,
Brawl as pleasantly !)

Possess this collection, it is too excellent to pass by. We will end with "Song"

This one song, this one song,
Is all I have to bring—
Yet in it are the fires that throng
The heavens' panelling :

In it is the sun-born vow
That life has sworn to keep
Till the last star from the last sky
Bends to the lower deep ;

In it is the bliss and stir
Of all Springs yet to be ,
Held in the hushed throb of the air,
The heard throb of the sea.

Mrs. Hamilton supplies this comment:

"Someone has said that the best way to the enjoyment of poetry is in the creation of it. This may be why I write it, for I enjoy every phase of life, even to its hard knocks, so I go on writing poetry and having a swell time doing it.

"I think we should write poetry only when we find joy in doing so. I hear some persons tell of how they agonize over a poem—what hard work it is. This may be true of a poet who writes book-length poems, but my own are always brief and so there is no time for agony. An emotion recollected in tranquility, a brief brain storm over something that has moved me deeply, and *my* poem is done. Like Poe, I do not believe there is any such thing as a long poem. Of necessity it becomes prose much of the way, because emotion cannot be kept at white heat for very long periods ; and when emotion goes, poetry goes. I think poetry should be written because it increases the sum total of joy in a world that remains, for the most part too sad."

It is interesting to meet a woman who, after a long and successful life of wifehood, motherhood and social activity, turns to poetry, which is what Rose Robinson Morrow Previtali has done.

Pinnacles (Fine Editions Press, New York), is a slim volume but the content is not small. She speaks from a full heart and maturity. "The Glorious Discontent" gives us the key to this writer's sincerity :

Their glorious discontent,
Rebellion in every line ;
The urge that takes youth out
To seek *their* way about
Through rough but truer paths,
To goal of *their* design.
Woe if you obstruct
Growth so free and fine.

Perhaps it has been the experience of those who may read this page the dejection of some catastrophe and Mrs. Previtali's short comment in "Nothing Is Lost" expresses a truth :

Mistakes should wisdom give
And each one filed away
As knowledge to be used :
Light, for another day.

Mrs. Previtali, recently dining with me and her husband Dr. Previtali, asked me how I liked her book. With a bluntness that belongs to my family, I replied : "It is too preachy." And going further into the matter, I suggested that we Anglo-Saxons have to fight against preaching, a difficulty that the Latins never meet. She took it like the true poet she is. ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

A ROYAL ACADEMY OF POETRY

I should like to refer to one or two points raised by Mr. Nicholas Moore in his constructive letter on the subject of a Royal Academy of Poetry.

He fears that all the best poets might not be R.A.P.s, either because they did not want to be or because they were not elected. This is, of course, a dsitinct possibility, and where an authoritative body holds away in any of the Arts it always has been, and probably always will be, the case that a few important elements will remain outside the membership of such a body. But I do not think that this need necessarily be regarded as an overwhelming misfortune, and certainly not in itself sufficient to offset the advantages and influence for good of a talented and authoritative leadership. Most of us will agree that the membership and design of the R.A.P. should be broad enough to avoid acting as a brake on poetic experiment and freedom. But I believe also that one good result of the Academy would be that a brake would be put on the publication of much esoteric and third-rate synthetic verse which has, of recent years, done much to discredit poetry in the eyes not only of the general public but also in those who have more than a passing instinct for poetry and seek inspiration therein. One of the results and, I hope, one of the objectives of the R.A.P., would be to bring poetry to the people and to further the aim of the Poetry Society by inducing in the public "a clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it."

Referring to the construction of the R.A.P., Mr. Moore's proposals might well provide a broad basis on which to work, although as regards the selection of the annual exhibits I think it would be necessary for the poems submitted to pass through some kind of a sieve in the first place before being passed on to the members of the "handing committee." Otherwise the members of that committee would, unless I am much mistaken, be subjected to such a bombardment of poems of all qualities that they would not be able to stand up to the task of giving fair and reasonable consideration to the work submitted to them. The sieve I have referred to might consist of approved poetry groups, clubs or centres throughout the country, ideally, perhaps, one such group in each county. This suggestion has been made to me by Mr. Herbert Hudson, the founder of the Suffolk Poetry Club, and is one that might well be developed. Groups and Centres such as are affiliated to the Poetry Society could well undertake this work, whilst other components of the sieve might consist of independent and select groups of poets, poetry journals, certain colleges and schools and, in fact, any movement club or society in which poetry has a recognised place.

Mr. Moore's proposed list of members of the R.A.P. is an interesting one, although there seem to be a few rather prominent names omitted, no doubt accidentally. In the first stages of the Academy, however, it might perhaps be advisable to proceed cautiously in the election of members and not necessarily elect the full complement immediately. The election of this first panel of R.A.P.s, and the method by which it was brought about, would probably be one of the major difficulties confronting the R.A.P., but it would by no means be an insuperable one.

To refer, in conclusion, to the question of finance which Mr. Moore seems to regard as one of the greatest snags, I hardly think that this need be so. Just as the Royal Academy of Arts derives its funds from its annual exhibitions, so could the R.A.P. secure a sufficient return from the sale of its annual book of verse to enable it to cover all publications and general administration expenses. If there should be those who are sceptical about the possibility of a widespread demand for this annual volume, particularly those who may have had some painfully intimate experience of

poetry sales, I will venture to make what may seem to be the rash and wildly optimistic forecast that, after the teething years had passed, a sale of 100,000 copies a year would be a reasonable possibility, provided the book were designed, produced and placed before the public in an efficient and exciting manner, and providing, of course, that this annual flowering of the nation's muse was such as to inspire and refresh the public, rather than depress, enrage and bewilder it. In mentioning this figure I should perhaps add that I have in mind a popular edition selling for say 1s. and a "library" edition selling for several times this price, but both editions to represent, within their limits, the high watermark of the book designer's, printer's and binder's art.

As regards preliminary finance, there should be little difficulty in raising a guarantee fund, the subscribers to which could be called upon to implement their guarantee only in case of need. Or, in view of the fact that we are spending some £14,000,000 a day on the prosecution of the war, perhaps it would not be unreasonable or extravagant to ask for an initial State grant of say £1,000 for the purpose of inaugurating the R.A.P. on a sound financial basis, and thus assisting in raising poetry to its merited place in the life of the nation. Or would it? P. E. LEAVER.

Ambleside, April 9th.

The time has come when the foundation of a Royal Academy of Poetry must leave the ranks of desultory correspondence and become the subject of practical plans. It is true, as Mr. Nicholas Moore writes in the March issue, that there are difficulties in the way, but the Royal Academy of Dancing recently obtained a Royal Charter, and there is no reason to suppose that a like privilege will be withheld from the sister art of Poetry.

It is always easier to build about an existing nucleus, and the nucleus available is The Poetry Society, whose breadth of view should frighten none from adopting it for such a purpose. The advantages are obvious; a Headquarters for administration and small meetings, a magnificent Library, an international prestige and a large membership of persons interested in the advancement of the art of poetry.

To the founding membership I would suggest adding a few persons of great literary distinction, even though they are not writers of poetry, a few distinguished workers for the advancement of poetry, and one or two great speakers of verse, such as Henry Ainley. They can, if need be, bear the name of Counsellors, and be elected for a limited period, say for five years. Once the Academy is well established there may be no need to elect more.

There will, of course, be considerable jealousy and squabbling in the choice of the thirty or forty "Immortals" who will form the founding membership. I confess that I had never heard the names of some of those proposed by Mr. Nicholas Moore, but I would suggest that he has strangely omitted Ruth Pitter and Curt Peters from the list.

I do not agree that finance will prove a difficulty. The expenses, if my suggestion of using The Poetry Society be adopted, would be small, and could be covered by a subscription of £1 from thirty R.A.P.s and 10s. from forty A.R.A.P.s, making £50 a year. As for the proposed annual volume, it would cost the Academy nothing. Any established publisher would be pleased to publish it—obvious choices being the O.U.P. or C.U.P.—for at 10s. 6d. there would, in normal times, be no difficulty in selling 1,000 copies for the Christmas trade, and we might sell double that amount. There would be no royalties paid to the authors, but each would be expected to deposit the MSS. of his poem with the Academy. He would be allowed to reproduce his poem without payment, but others, such as anthologists and the like, would, of course, have to pay the Academy royalties for reproduction rights.

I suggest that you, Sir, as a person independent of scholastic bias, should set up at once a small Committee which, working mostly by correspondence, would collect and collate the ideas of the many under the various headings into which the subject falls, and publish its findings in a few months' time in the *Review*. From this the Committee could proceed to contact (a) booksellers' associations with a view to promoting the sales of books on poetry; (b) the B.B.C. who are already doing something to revive an interest in poetry, and (c) the Press, including the publishers of periodicals, to persuade them to publish more poetry and, where they review books, to give more space to poetry review. The same Committee might then proceed to consider some sort of a school where lectures and demonstrations on the technique of verse-writing might be given, and competent criticism of tentative efforts obtained. If one cannot teach the writing of poetry, one can give hints on the writing of sound verse, even as a painter or sculptor hands on the methods, self-devised or inherited, of his art.

We hear much of a New Order after the war. Let us hope it will have room for poetry, for it will be a sad world if it has not. But if little can be done while the war is on, much can be planned. Let us begin now. CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

In respect of the suggestion of a Royal Academy of Poetry which Mr. P. E. Leaver has so courageously put forward in the *Poetry Review* of September-October, 1941, and which you kindly permitted to be supported by my letter in your issue of January-February, 1942, I should like to say that my wish for the 40 R.A.s of Poetry and an appropriate number of A.R.A.s of Poetry was that these distinctions should be allotted *to writers of Poetry of high quality*, just as they are so allotted to painters, sculptors and architects in the Royal Academy. I do not agree with the proposal of Mr. Nicholas Moore in your March-April issue that persons who have assisted poetry in some way other than by the personal execution of it should share these honours. Critics, philanthropists and editors of Poetry papers, etc., should have, if necessary, another form of reward or recognition arranged for them by the Royal Academy of Poetry.

It is for the purification of verse writing that I would welcome most this proposed establishment.

It would seem that after permission had been obtained from the Prime Minister, a foundational committee of cultural persons should be formed to elect the 40 R.A.s. The Laureate, the Poetry Society, representatives of literary societies and independent critics of unbiased tenor and selected members of a general intellectual aristocracy should form a nucleus best fitted to "hammer out" the choice of the 40 British verse-writers proved worthy of this honour. A very severe test would be imposed, bearing in mind the lofty traditions and mighty heritage of our English tongue and the long and compelling line of its torch-bearers. But there would be no prejudice of any kind. No school would be excluded, but selections should not bear the impress of a transitory faction and preference should always be given to the noblest and purest exponent of his school.

I consider that Mr. Nicholas Moore has contributed appreciably to the object in view, especially in his remark that "if the State subsidises painting, why should it not subsidise poetry?"

Let us approach the Prime Minister, considering what exalted verse-writing means—here and now—*as part of the war effort.*

Hereford. April 6th, 1942. ARTHUR ROW.

May I congratulate you and your staff on the way you manage to overcome war-time difficulties and produce so interesting and well "made up" a REVIEW?

But I was shocked to read of Mr. Nicholas Moore's morbid desire for a Royal Academy of Poetry! How the R.A.P.s would quarrel at their Board Meetings as to what is and what is *not* poetry, each R.A.P.-ping—the choice of the other—until they reached a kind of Ella-Wheeler-Wilcox-cum-Pound (or even *half* a Pound) compromise!

Such an institution might, perhaps, help to popularize poetry of a sort—we English love our art to have the stamp of official approval. And its associates might turn an honest penny by selling obituary verse of a more workman-like type than that which adorns our weekly country newspapers. The charmingly elegiac lyrics of Mr. Dylan Thomas (one of Mr. Moore's suggested R.A.P.s), would surely win golden opinions from the relatives of defunct local worthies.

"The gentleman lay graveward with his furies" or . . "With bones unbuttoned to the half-way wind" would implore "the passing tribute of a sigh" even from an heir! But since he *does* include in his list a few well-known veterans: Mr. Masefield, Mr. de la Mare and Miss Sitwell, for instance, it is strange that he should have left out Lord Alfred Douglas whose sonnets are admitted by all the literary critics who count, to be among the finest in the English language and who has forgotten more about the art of poetry than most of Mr. Moore's R.A.P.s ever knew or are ever likely to know.

PERCY COLSON.

St. Cross Hospital, Winchester.

A SHORT REPLY TO CAPTAIN ROOK

Captain Alan Rook seems to have misunderstood my article in the current number of THE POETRY REVIEW and to have drawn conclusions from it which I think are not borne out by the text.

I took exception to his statement in the previous issue that "there is after all no reason why poetry should have meaning," and I wrote "there is therefore no reason why poetry should not be nonsense."

I did not expect, under the circumstances, these words to be taken as the expression of *my* opinion; they were merely used to show later on the result of the statement made by Captain Rook, and I fear I did not express my view quite as forcibly as was apparently necessary, because Captain Rook takes me to mean that I agree with his statement. This certainly is not the case. I repeat that meaningless words cannot constitute poetry. If Captain Rook had qualified the word "meaningless" there might have been nothing to be said and he assumes quite groundlessly, I think, I recognize the word only in its limited significance. As far as I can gather this does seem to be the case with him because he says:

> "The more imaginatively we use words the more we emphasize the association content at the expense of the meaning."

But the word *meaning* has both literal and metaphorical significance, though Captain Rook seems to ignore this latter and as applied to poetry, greater significance.

Anyhow he speaks of his inability, when very young, to understand one of two lines he quotes from Shakespeare—here they are:

> "The multitudinous sea incardine
> Making the green one red."

If words can convey a "sense of mystery and vastness and awe," as Captain Rook says, they cannot be said to be without meaning; and in fact he did later on come to understand what at first had been "quite unintelligible." He then asks this extraordinary question:

> "Now are we to say, as Mr. Bourne suggests, that at least until I reached the age of sixteen only the second line was poetic?"

I rather wish that Captain Rook's imaginative activities did not extend to ascribing to me suggestions I did not make. I made no suggestion. I had not the pleasure of knowing him at that age, nor, beyond the pages of THE POETRY REVIEW, have I now any means of judging his mental reactions, neither can I see how they could possibly affect the intrinsic value of a poem.

He then quotes the well-known lines from Keats':

"The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas and fairy lands forlorn."

These lines I say are pregnant with meaning not easily to be exhausted.

Captain Rook goes on to ask "to what extent do his (Keat's) words function to convey meaning and to what extent a sense of enchantment. If meaning was his primary aim then almost any scientist is the better poet. If enchantment was even partially achieved then we have admitted the *dual function of words*" (my italics). But why does Captain Rook stress this point in this connection ? : I have never denied it or sought to deny it ; on the contrary my whole argument is based upon it.

Thetford. April 6th. RAYMUND BOURNE.

MR. W. W. GIBSON AND MR. HERBERT PALMER

I am indebted to Mr. Herbert Palmer for correcting my error as to Mr. Wilfrid Gibson's "Urlyn the Harper." More to my purpose, perhaps, it would have been to note that, before Urlyn (1902), Mr. Gibson had published certain "Tales and Legends of the North," "Prelude," "The Death of Uther the King" and a poem on the Castle of the Seven Shields at Sewinshields Crag—in the "Northern Counties Magazine" for November and December, 1900 and January, 1901. That magazine was published in Newcastle ; and Mr. Titus Wilson of Kendal is given as one of the district agents. This may account for my inadvertently ascribing the publication of a subsequent volume to Kendal—a mistake I regret. (It is interesting to note further that the Manager of the "Northern Counties Magazine" was no other than Mr. Galloway Kyle.)

The main contention of my slight criticism, however, is not impaired by this bibliographical error. My object in writing was to establish Mr. Gibson's claim to be pre-eminently a poet of the North Country. The question of being, or not being, a war-poet was somewhat incidental to this argument. I did indeed say that war was inherent in the traditions of the Border, but meant to imply no more than that Mr. Gibson found himself (imaginatively) in Flanders in the same atmosphere as he might at Otterburn or Flodden. The analysis of the "Alert" was an after-thought, at the request of the Editor.

I should be truly sorry that any critic should think my paper "hasty." It followed almost the Horatian principle of revision ; and I might perhaps have hoped that the author of the touching "Little Will and Testament" would have been more sympathetic towards what is, in effect, an eulogy of the northern moors. Towards Mr. Gibson, I had believed myself to be, not merely scrupulously just, but even enthusiastically cordial.

Ulverston. T. E. CASSON.

A VISION OF FLORENCE

I enclose a sonnet, written as a rejoinder to one addressed to me by Robert Calignoc, suggesting a previous Florentine incarnation, and ending with the words :

"How sad to roam
In England here, when Florence is thy home !"

In various details of its present form [*excellent especially the first eight lines.*—ED.] it owes much to your excellent critical service, which helped me to see where I had not made my conception clear, and to remove some archaisms in poetic diction.

In case you have never been to Italy, and suffer, as I before I went there, from the stereotyped impression that the cypress is merely a dark and dolorous churchyard plant, a sort of vegetable hearse plume from which one turns shuddering away to look at some more cheerful feature of a landscape, I would like to say that, as a mechanical engineer, college trained in methods of scientific observation and deduction, I am quite prepared to write a monograph justifying the characterization of cypress in the first line as the strictly accurate record of a carefully observed optical phenomenon. The apparent reaction of the cypress in that latitude to red sunset rays, is a suffusion of fiery red at or near the surface of a tree, whose general colouring remains green. This riotous behaviour on part of the Dismal Jimmy of the vegetable kingdom so surprised me that, for my own satisfaction, I engaged in optical research on the spot to determine its contributary factors. The explanation is quite simple. The "fire-flashing Lord" referred to in the sestet is Mars, ruling planet of England and Florence.

O'er sunkissed cypress mantling fire I seem
Once more to gaze, from Olives' wooded height,
On dome and campanilé, while the Light
Glows rosy-gold on woods by Arno's stream.

From bridge, street, dome, to watch-tow'r, creeps his beam:
Far mountains fade: but hill-nigh, basking bright,
Blest Fiesole sheds vesper peace, ere night
Veils the dim-outlined splendours of my dream.

Yet waking brings, though far from Thee I dwell,
Not sadness, for thine own fire-flashing Lord,
Over this sea-girt glory too has reign:

Nay, more than all thy beauty's magic spell
Are living hopes, that draw my soul toward
This England, fighting on in Freedom's train!

ARKELL SHAW.

TIME POEMS

The POETRY REVIEW correspondents are apt to offer critical views rather than positive ones. It would be interesting to have the ideas of contributors—expressed either in verse or prose—on certain vital aspects of human existence. All poets must have a personal philosophy, and others might find some expression of this both suggestive and stimulating. Their views might also be of interest.

As it was my idea, perhaps I may be allowed to suggest the first subject for consideration. I have always been fascinated by the thought of Time, with its infinite mutations and possibilities. (In fact I have even gone so far as to read our cousin J. W. Dunne's books on the subject!) The pace of Time seems to depend on the circumstances, and to a lesser extent the will of the individual. The warm, gold timelessness of a summer noon, and the hurried sleety quest for buses in a wet London street, these may prove one's watch a liar by appearing to occupy the same space on its neatly glassed face.

The passage of Time has nothing to do with living in its true sense. For some people, Time has never passed at all—their conscious experience of life has been so

small. The artist, and especially the poet, has this advantage over other people—he *is* conscious of existence, and of everything implied by that. He has a heightened awareness of beauty, of suffering, of pleasure, of ugliness—of all that makes up the sum of human experience. This also means a greater measure of pain. He must reach the depths as inevitably as the heights.

No one has ever said to himself "I will be a poet," and become one; the reverse is usually the case—he finds one day that that is what he is. The urge of the creative mind must be about the most powerful force on earth. If only all those in whom it is could combine to translate it into action—"there's an end of war." Our poets should be men who take their dreams untarnished in their strong right hands and force them to come true. But here is one of my *Time* poems:

You cannot conquer, Time.
Though you triumphant seem
I will not in the quicken
of leaves acknowledge you
nor in the buds that thicken
already, under snow.

Not in the passing days
slipping through space like leaves:
the moments when the heart
is silent, knowing truth—
in these you have no part.
Beyond the curve of earth

are they; no passing comet
brushing the icy summit
of heaven is more rare.
I will not know you, Time,
until the heart, swept bare
shall know its hour is come.

Jordans. April 12th. MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

T. S. ELIOT AND THE LAY READER

All poetry lovers owe you a debt for publishing Margaret Gregson's beautiful poem "Escape from Time" in the March-April *Poetry Review*. This is real creative art, because it contains imaginative feeling and the most exquisite beauty.

There are times when one feels that poetry is sinking under the dead weight of obscurity and ugliness and aesthetic turpitude. Relief comes, however, when poets like Margaret Gregson are allowed to be articulate. So long as they survive we can still pay homage to the heritage of Shakespeare, Milton and Shelley. It is to be hoped that we shall read many more of this gifted lady's poems.

On the other hand, may a halt be called to this perpetual explaining away of T. S. Eliot? It is the reverse of a kind service to the poet himself.

The title of Mr. Stephenson's article is offensive:—"T. S. Eliot and the Lay Reader."

Does he regard Mr. Eliot as one upon whom the Apostolic Succession has descended? And if so, from whom has he received the ineffable laying-on of hands? And are the readers of *Poetry Review* to be likened to those miserable creatures who strive to reach ordination by means of the back staircase entrance to the church?

This attitude is perilously like sacerdotalism invading the province of aesthetics.

To take one quotation which Mr. Stephenson makes :—

"I have given you hands,"
"I have given you speech,"
"I have given you my Law,"
"I have given you lips,"
"I have given you hearts,"
"I have given you Power of Choice."

Falstaff would have called this "damned iteration."

Milton said more than all this in one line.

Mr. Stephenson says :—

> "The cumulative effect of this cardinal thinking provokes a demand for the culmination of each upward thrust."

He is clearly telling the poor lay reader to continue sitting still with deafening speed. In another place he speaks of Eliot's "deep-rooted awareness of balance."

With all respect, this kind of thing must have been what Wilde had in mind when he said :—

> "Modern Culture was something which should not be spoken of in private."

Mr. Stephenson makes much play with the music in Eliot's poetry, but Eliot will not thank him for this.

It was Eliot who said that Milton's great defect was his skill and expertness in music.

It is pleasant to learn that we must think of Eliot only as an American and not an English poet.

This is heartening to those of us who are incapable of understanding the American language. I always admired the Dieppe landlady who placed a card in her window which stated, "English spoken, American understood."

Yet Longfellow was an American and some of us still consider that "Evangeline" and "The Death of Minnehaha" are perfect English poems.

I doubt if anything has come from America during the last forty years equal in loveliness poor Bret Harte's "Sprig of Western Pine."

Presumably America has to be divided into two periods, before and after Hollywood.

Mr. Stephenson says "he can dissect the component parts of his method." No doubt he can, and very expertly, but what is the disease, and why talk down to the poor lay reader like a Giraffe of Super Culture.

It is very refreshing to turn from this to Mr. Raymond Bourne's most excellent letter on Alan Rook's "Road to Nonsense." I would support him in everything he says and especially his just remark about the craze for originality being the root of the evil in all the fields of Art.

It may be the approach of age in me, but I have a certain very definite opinion about young men who write about poetry and poets. They seem to me not so much concerned about the poets they are writing about, but are pre-occupied with the cleverness of their own writing about them. Obscurity is an old evil and our young men in the van of literary progress are very much the same as the young men of three hundred years ago. They might very well have taken to heart Guzman D'Alparache's advice to Gil Blas.

Mr. Bourne should not have mentioned Gray's "Elegy." This is dragging in beauty for the illumination of Lancashire trippers. The Elegy can have no place in the minds of poets who worship tube trains. It belongs to a time when men read poetry because they thought it helped to make life beautiful.

Henry Irving once asked an actor what he thought was the meaning of a certain line he had spoken. The actor replied "meaning? oh! come off it, Guvnor."

To the present generation there need be no meaning in anything so long as there are plenty of loud speakers. H. L. SENIOR.

Slough.

THE PERMANENCE OF POETRY

I heard Mr. Ernest Bevin say at a stage meeting the other day that "one of the greatest cultural institutions that Britain has ever seen was the Theatre, and it was necessary to maintain it to preserve the characteristics of the people. The great diversity of character existing in the British Race was being eliminated by the uniformity of the period, therefore, it was essential that the Stage should be protected and maintained to counteract this uniformity."

Surely if there is anything calculated to preserve the spirit and tradition of English ideals it is its Literature. That possesses more than anything else the power to disperse the influences of mechanical inventions upon our national character. Where the Stage appeals to a few Literature appeals to the multitude. Moreover while the theatre conveys only fleeting impressions books are intimate things which enter the hearts and souls of those who cherish them.

The Theatre is, after all, a fugitive amusement conveying a fleeting sensation, but Literature leaves a deep and abiding impression. It can in story, history and romance prove a source of inspiration for past achievements, and create among the community a fervent desire to keep alive the chivalry and the institutions that have contributed to the nation's greatness. The writings of the Ancients which are an inspiration to the world for all time prove how enduring and how stimulating Literature can be.

In our Literature Poetry has played an important part, and to the idealists, who like yourself at much personal sacrifice labour so unselfishly for its survival all that can be offered is deep-felt but often unexpressed thanks of those who appreciate the efforts of you and your colleagues. I for one take this opportunity of thanking you for your valued work on behalf of Poetry. LESLIE GREENE.

London, S.W.

COMPANION

THE even calmness of her lips,
The tired flung body, recumbent hips,
The dim train rocking to each mad wheel,
The hollow clang of steel on steel,
Remorseless shapes of half-seen things,
The growing dusk, the steam's thin strings,
The dark cold air, the beating rain,
The two eyes staring out the pane.

RONALD WESTBROOK

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

Delay in publication, which we hope will not persist, has interfered with entries for the premium competition this month. Contributors should not need the reminder of this long maintained feature and of the closing date for the next adjudication, the 1st of the second month covered by the issue. But we are able to welcome some newcomers, including RONALD WESTBROOK (Maidstone), who shares the award with PAULINE EMERIC (Taplow). We miss our old time Canadian, Vancouver and United States contributors, and deplore the interruption of communications and other evidences of the increasing influences of the war.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Evelyn Lloyd, Cheltenham;
Brenda Skene, Lustleigh;
Arthur Lynnford-Smith, Wanstead;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth.

COMMENDED

T. E. Casson, Ulverston;
P. R. W. Carr, Ferryhill;
Alice E. Collinge, Harwood;
Ellode Collins, Bournemouth;
Eileen Dix, Louth;
Dulcie Eden Greville, Wakefield;
J. H., Ealing, W.;
H. W. Harding, Twickenham;
M. D. Hastings, Baslow;
Dorothy Lamb, Boston, U.S.A.
G. E. B. McWilliam, London, N.;
C. Morton, Beaufort, Mon.;
Irene Ormsby, Thurgoland;
George Price, Hoylake;
Monica Pritchett, London, S.W.;
Harry Sefton, Lytham;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford;
D. E. C. Tomlin, Harrogate;
A. Doris L. Wilson, Bedford;

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by June 10th, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent.) It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author.

AROUSING SUSPICION

I had been to hear "A Shakespeare Commemoration" by Mr. Donald Wolfit at the Poetry Society and was consequently left in a fervent state of admiration and enthusiasm. I walked along the street neither knowing nor caring for the present but living the memorable scenes from "Macbeth."

My mind revolted against the thought of riding home in a grimy, groaning train. I wanted to sit upon a cloud and float home dreaming of Shakespeare. As however, the train was my only means of transport, I reluctantly got in and settled myself in a corner seat. The train jerkily pulled out of the station.

With the fantasy of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and the tragic potency of "Romeo and Juliet" in my mind, I thought what a dull, insignificant creature I was. Not claim worthy of one poem; not one verse.

Suddenly I snatched up my brief case and took out a sheet of notepaper. Words danced about in my head; words that I wanted to express as great and wonderful thought. But no, they eluded me.

"The mazarine sky hangs low,
Embroidered starry bright."

Evening—stillness—trees—. It was no use, I could not write. Oh mighty and immortal Shakespeare how I wish that I had your inspiration.

I tried again:

"Twilight on a summer evening,
A bird's last sleepy coo—"

A pause while I racked my brain. I looked round the compartment. There was no inspiration there. A few late City workers homeward bound, a plumber, two girls reading magazines and a railway official. The window offered even less food for an unimaginative would-be poet and I lapsed back into a bemusement of words and rhythm.

"Twilight on a summer evening,
A bird's last sleepy coo—
A potent stillness, latticed trees,
The dusk's enveloping blue."

I looked up triumphantly. I had done it! One little verse. Not very good, but nevertheless it rhymed. Blue and coo. Coo was not a good word. Perhaps I could improve upon it? I folded the sheet of notepaper and got out a fresh one.

Just then a little man opposite me, wearing a bowler hat and with a bristling grey moustache leaned forward. Producing a card from his pocket he said almost confidentially, although within earshot of the half dozen other occupants of the compartment, "Excuse me madam, but I have been watching you make notes of certain things along this railway line and I am very anxious to know exactly what information you have taken down and for what reason. Here is my warrant for asking you."

Jolted rudely out of my dream world, I opened my mouth with surprise. Then I saw the delightful humour of the situation and I had an unconquerable desire to laugh. I blurted out: "I've been trying to write poetry," and thrust the sheet of notepaper into his hands.

Amid much confusion and laughter from the other occupants of the carriage he apologised. I blushed. The train drew into my station and with as much dignity as I could muster I got out.

Gone was my dream of writing a beautiful poem. "Making notes of certain things along the railway line." Why I hadn't noticed as much as a signal-box. I had been thinking—thinking of beautiful words—beautiful thoughts—and Shakespeare.

PATRICIA YOUNG.

To "THE POETRY REVIEW"

Ah, little golden gate,
Jewelled, inviolate,
How do I fret, athirst
When you open to me late!

Day's-wage to earn
Heavy the fetters burn
Scorching the heart. I yearn
For Beauty's Grecian urn.

Gate, may you never close
Against Love's rose,
Bud open to reveal
Where Life's being springs and flows.

Small golden star
Guide us afar
Where earth's seasons range
Through worlds beauteous and rare.
Lest death wrap us round
And the dull booming sound
Of work and of strife
Even deadlier wound.

A draught immortal
Through this low portal
Be yours to pour
Evermore.

Wakefield,
April, 1942.

DULCIE EDEN GREVILLE.

VISION

COUNT ZYGMUNT SZARY ADDRESSES THE R.A.F. AND POLISH AIRMEN

Before the Chariots of War
Rolled over the earth,
The brooding thunders of thought
Darkened the natural mirth
of our soul
hollow and old.

Before the Chances of peace
Will greater efforts release
We will fight for human rights
We must purge and scorch the earth
Underneath our deadly sights.
blast the soul
hollow the old

Burning cities, tearing hearts,
Underneath the wretched drawfs,
And of those smug souls that stroll
Along the shabby streets of old,
Seeing nothing but their feet
weary and cold
fearing the old,

In the crowded crooked towns,
We are blasting new horizons,
Through the scum that ugly greed
Has built with dirty bricks and plaster
Through the walls that never need
Have darkened life and human laughter
the gay, the bold
will never be old.

We will show green fields again
Flooding daylight through the breech
And brilliant sunshine after the rain
Has washed the pavement stained with pain
the storm and rain
will it come again ?

In the misleading peace that seems
To last do not forget the youthful dreams
As in the past. But let them not disperse
The manly valour of your deeds
behold at last
your word is told.

Fierce and free fly on for ever
Awake after ages of sleep
Fight on in peace but make the struggle fair
Noble guardians of peace
Knights of the air
noble and fair
Men of the air.

ONE, HAVING STUDIED PHILOSOPHY,

Loses Faith in Materialism, and Goes to the War.

O joy, joy, joy !
Shout, trumpets ; blare, all bugles ; sweet bells, ring !
Leap, lambs light-hearted ; every power employ
Itself to triumph and to sing !

Because the stulted man,
The little man who digs in the mire,
At last is proven liar,
Half-man who routs as swine for feast—
Thy pardon, beast !
Thou who art truly swine
Canst vehicle the Divine ;
Thou hast thy part in Nature's plan ;
True to thy being's law,
Than swine art more,
Creature of God, who all thy days
Mayst grunt His praise.

Not so half-man,
Who looks where he began,
And seeing an ape-thing, low, ugly, brute,
Cries out "Lo, I am he,
And all my years shall be
Bound in obedience to my root.

Here let my life be checked,
All that I boasted, spirit, intellect,
Faith, hope, the vision that would make me more
Than what I was before—
All that abandoned be
Now that I see
Esse, ente, soul,
Being and whole
Equals its root—
This brute."
So might the, lilies, lifting
Beauty aloof, sublime,
Out of dark waters drifting,
Swaying to each wind's shifting
Yet anchored deep in slime,
Cry to the flowering meadows,
Cry to the sun and showers,

"Hearken and see, all creatures,
What hideous nature ours!
Not gold, not white, our chalice,
All loveliness we lack;
Fed from the river's blackness,
How is our essence black!"

But joy, O joy.
Now that I know
The little man, the half-man, beast-man, lies—
Out of his fear and sloth, because he dreads to go
The hard, high way, because the morning skies
Trouble and dazzle his vision; his stony eyes
Love the snug darkness, soft, effortless, warm
He fears the spirits venture and high emprise;
He keeps himself from harm
Till in the earth, poor mole, he rots and dies.

But joy, joy, joy!
Now let us all our powers employ
In praise that we are called to meet this hour
And on beast-man and all his kin
Wage deathless war,
Whether he reign without, within,
Whether in mailéd might,
He stride the earth and all that's fair
Wither and die before him
Or whether his insidious blight,
Sown in the soul, raise up a Moloch there,
Who without reason, ruth,
Taking in vain the sacred name of Truth,
Bids men adore him.

Now let us with the sword of thought
Bring him to naught;
Let us with the sword of steel
The strength of dedicated flesh reveal,
Casting ourselves afar
Beyond all limitations
Of space and time and things that were and are,
Cling to the fixed stars in their stations,
Courage, Mercy, Faith,
Truth that the spirit saith.
We cannot fear the battle or the storm
Nor any anguish that the years may send
Our eyes have looked beyond the form
And husk of being, to the Cause, the End,
The living purpose that has shaped our mind
That shapes our universe. But what we find
We may not tell, save in a fairy tale.
Come, all men, strive with us, fight, fail,
And fight again, find Heaven in Hell.

Reading. I. M. HUBBARD.

INVITATION

To bask in the sun parlour

I can outwit the winter's ways,
For I can catch the sunshine's rays,
And nurse them till you will in time
Believe yourself in some warm clime,
Far, far from here, and in a land
Where all things are as I command.
Oh let me put my spell upon you,
And you will say to care, "Begone—you."
Forgetting all the pain and fear
In this, our world, war-worn, and drear.
Forgetting guns, and planes, and tanks,
And men who march in swinging ranks.
So come with me where life is sweet,
Come by my magic, and retreat
Where dreamy music fills the air,
And laughing nymphs bind up their hair
While fountains play, and for your pleasure
Will rise and dance in dainty measure.
Now you may wander at your ease
Amidst the flowers and shady trees,
So come, and let me have my sway,
Come, come, and bask, and let's away.

ELIZABETH BARRETT.